SAINT MADELEINE SOPHIE

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Saint Madeleine Sophie

1779—1865

SAINT MADELEINE SOPHIE

FOUNDRESS OF THE SOCIETY OF THE SACRED HEART

1779 to 1865

BY

MAUD MONAHAN

WITH A PREFACE BY

HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL BOURNE

ARCHBISHOP OF WESTMINSTER

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TO

OUR LADY

MEDIATRIX OF ALL GRACES

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PREFACE

When we are dealing with the lives of the Saints, and consider the wonderful things which they accomplished, we are ever reminded of the vast difference which exists between work planned by God and work wrought by unaided human skill and ingenuity.

Probably the greatest harm caused by the French Revolution was the deprivation which it inflicted, on almost a whole generation, of normal Christian teaching and education. The old teaching corporations were disbanded, the public practice of religion was made for a time impossible, and children grew up to adult age without opportunity of learning the fundamental truths which are necessary for the guidance of their lives. There are many things to regret in the public life of France to-day. But if we compare it with the France that existed at the moment of the restoration of religion after the Revolution, we can see how enormously the position has improved, though it will take many generations still to remedy the evils which that chaotic period brought forth.

What has been the main remedial factor?

Without a doubt Christian and Catholic education, which, if it had been allowed to discharge its task unhampered and unchecked by renewed periods of actively hostile legislation, would by now have produced a regenerated France. The old teaching forces of the Church gradually returned to France. They built up painfully the edifice which had been cast down. But it is mainly, so far as the education of women is concerned, from new elements of educational strength that regeneration has come forth. The Society of the Sacred Heart holds a pre-eminent place among the latter, and it is very clearly a divinely inspired work.

Had a statesman, or an *educationist*, set about the task, how would he have proceeded? He would certainly have sought someone of conspicuous character and talent, with powerful political and family connections, able to command large resources; and he would have given to her the widest and fullest culture that could be obtained. And in so doing he would have acted wisely in accordance with human prudence. But God's ways are not our ways, nor our thoughts His thoughts. He chooses the weak things, and, making them obedient to His Will, He accomplishes by them His greatest purposes.

We know the great teaching Society of the Sacred Heart, French in origin, but to-day truly international, as every really Catholic organisation must be; spread not only through Europe, but all over the world, even to far Japan. Already five of its chief Superiors have been of nationality not French, two of them of our own race, Mother Mabel Digby and Mother Janet Stuart, who both

had a large part in the expansion and development of its energies. From whom, under God, has all this come? From the humble daughter of a little-known vine-dresser, unknown herself for many years, who was gradually and unconsciously prepared for an immense educational work, remaining meantime with scanty means and without powerful supporters. Humanly there is no proportion between the great Society as we now know it and its foundress. The proportion is divine and comes from God alone. As with the beginning so with the growth. The religious congregation founded by Saint Madeleine Sophie, who passed to rest just sixty years ago, has traversed every stage of God's appointed road to success. The falling away of early trusted associates; the hostile criticism of those who saw only externals and could not grasp the inner spirit; the attempts to depart from the ideals of the divinely guided foundress; misunderstandings with ecclesiastical superiors; inevitable human shortcomings and failure—none of these things has been wanting to the life work of Saint Madeleine Sophie.

And to-day the whole Church of God rejoices with her and her Society, as the infallible voice of Christ's Vicar proclaims her heroic sanctity, and calls us to her veneration and to trustful acknowledgment of her power of intercession for our needs. God is ever wonderful in His Saints, and it would be difficult to find a period in history wherein He has shown Himself more wonderful than in these days in which we live. There is much to sadden and to depress if we view events only on the surface; but there is far more to console and to encourage,

if we turn our eyes to those hidden treasures of true Christian life and practice, wherein God is unceasingly working the wonders of His might.

Saint Madeleine Sophie, pray for us.

FRANCIS CARDINAL BOURNE,
Archbishop of Westminster.

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LIFE OF SAINT MADELEINE SOPHIE

1779 TO 1865

CHAPTER I

THE GRAIN OF MUSTARD SEED

In a little garret in a quiet street of Joigny a child stood gazing from the small window. Books were strewn on the table behind her, and she still held one in her hand. But her thoughts had wandered out beyond, over the red roofs of the little town, the dark tree-tops of the sombre forest and the happy vine-clad hills, out beyond the visible horizon, where lay that great and troubled world of which her books told stories—stories of kings and heroes, of great cities, of the wondrous ocean and of far-off lands. What message did it hide for her? What part was she to play? Her eyes were full of dreams and questions waiting for an answer. None so wonderful and none so unexpected as the truth in the still veiled future.

Little more than a century passed, and a great assembly gathered in the hall of the Consistory in the Vatican. Cardinals, bishops, priests, and religious awaited the arrival of Pope Pius X. He

was to speak to them of the life-work of that child, and to set the seal of his authority on her sanctity.

It was Sunday, February 12, 1905. Taking the Gospel of the day for the subject of his discourse, the Holy Father declared that it was an inexpressible consolation to him to promulgate the decree concerning the heroicity of the virtue of Madeleine Sophie Barat, for it seemed to him that in her life, and in that of the Institute founded by her, there was a faithful image of the Life of Christ and of His Church. 'To what is the Kingdom of God like, and to what shall I resemble it?' asked Our Lord, and in answer spoke the Parable of the Mustard Seed; 'which is indeed the least of all seeds, but when it is grown up is greater than all herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air may dwell in the branches thereof.' 'This parable spoken of the Church by its Divine Founder may find its application too in the life of Madeleine Sophie. Born in a poor cottage of humble parents, she lived unknown for years in her native place, then going to Paris . . . founded her Institute without material help of any kind. . . . But the grain of mustard seed became a great tree, which extended its branches in Europe, America, and Australia, and immense has been the number of souls who have sought refreshment in its shade.'

The child who was thus given her place among the great ones of the Church of Christ began her life on December 12, 1779.

Fear reigned in the little town of Joigny that night—fear, for a great fire was raging, and in the lurid light of its flames, amidst the terrified cries of the frightened people, this second daughter was

born to Jacques and Madeleine Barat, two months before the expected time. Fire was a curiously appropriate symbol of her life. For it was a soul of fire that dwelt in that small frail body. The impetuosity of her movements, the eagerness of her speech, the brilliancy of her eyes betrayed the exuberance of life within—an exuberance which endured to the end. 'Strength and voice are failing me,' she said when eighty-four years of age, 'even my eyesight is going, but what matter, if the soul can gather all its energy and work more vigorously as the body weakens.' In the last winter of her life one of her daughters wrote, 'There is nothing left of her but a flame of fire.'

A flame of fire she was, and with its characteristics. At first so tremulous in her hold on life that it seemed the slightest breath would end her striving. But sheltered in her mother's love she throve, a delight to all by her winning, gracious ways and quaint speeches.

'That child will play a great part in the world and live to be eighty-five,' said a gipsy wanderer as, passing in the streets of Joigny by the house of Jacques Barat, she saw Sophie in the arms of her mother. The mother's eyes brightened with pleasure at the words, and pressing her little one closer to her heart, she dreamt of 'great things' awaiting her.

A brother, eleven years older than the child, had been chosen as her godfather. He was already aspiring to the priesthood, and studying in the College at Joigny. The duty might have seemed to him and to all merely a honorary one, for Sophie was in the safe shelter of a Christian home. But, led by the Spirit of God, unknowing what he did,

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from the outset Louis viewed his position seriously He saw but little of his godchild, however, for the first ten years of her life. When she was only five he left his native town for the great seminary at Sens. A brilliant scholar, he was still too young for the priesthood when his studies were completed at the age of twenty-two. His superiors accordingly sent him to pass the intervening years as Professor of Mathematics at Joigny. Here his true life's work awaited him.

Brought once more under his father's roof, he was amazed at the development of his little sister. She seemed like some rare exotic plant in the quiet homely surroundings. He became convinced that a great destiny lay before her, and planned to prepare her for it. Sophie's earliest teaching had probably been given to her by her mother, who was a woman of some education ; or she may have gone for the customary two years to the *petite école* of Joigny. There she would have learnt to read French, and when she was sufficiently proficient in this branch, Latin would have been added, the textbook being the Psalms. Writing, Arithmetic, and a well-planned course of Catechism would have completed her curriculum. For this last we know that she went to the classes held for all the children in the Church of St. Thibault.

She was only ten, and had, what is often found in children, an instinctive realisation and consequent love of God and all things beautiful and holy, joined with an exuberant, vehement love of play. Having met with nothing but love, she was straight and true to an exceptional degree. But side by side with these childlike qualities, and in the midst of the

most buoyant outbursts, there was discernible an unexpected maturity of judgment, a keen power of observation, an astonishing memory, and a quite unchildlike fund of common sense, 'that master of human life,' as Bossuet described it, allied with the best of woman's dower, a sure gift of intuition. Her judgments were of one much older than her age, and her home circle was amused by her criticisms, from which the weak points of those around her did not escape.

But amidst all her gifts, her heart held the chief place, and was from the first her ruling power. 'It was by her heart she was to live, to reign, to suffer.'[1]

The first great object of Sophie's love was her mother. A gentle and sensitive woman, by education superior to her surroundings, she had not met the response she had hoped for in her married life. Jacques Barat was a simple, patient, hard-working, kind-hearted man, with no personal aspiration beyond his daily routine of life, though more far-seeing, perhaps, than his wife in what concerned his children. The child divined the unexpressed cravings of her mother's heart, and leaving her games would try in a thousand childlike, loving ways to console a sorrow she could not understand. The mother clung to her as to a support. 'You will be the comfort of my old age?' she would ask, almost entreat, and the child promised it with all her heart. These oft-repeated scenes impressed the eager, active mind, and gave Sophie a thoughtfulness beyond her years, a feeling of companionship and friendship with her mother, a sense of sorrow as of a mysterious presence.

[1] Baunard, *Histoire de Ste. M. Sophie*, vol. i, ch. i, p. 7.

While all loved and delighted in her, her brother alone realised the problem of her existence. He was troubled, he said later, at the warmth and vehemence of her affection even at a very early age. That she could love deeply and much, he saw, and his dream was to win this power to God.

He feared for her the storms of sorrow and suffering that almost inevitably accompany such a nature on its path through life. Such a flame could only burn safely, he felt, in a heart that was given to God. That done, her love, purified and controlled, would be great enough to embrace the world.

He resolved therefore to educate her in all seriousness and earnestness, and to teach her all he could, that God might find in her a fitting instrument to His hand when the hour of her call should come. He made known his scheme to his father and mother. His authority, as of one destined for the priesthood was great in their eyes, and won for him a willing but puzzled consent.

Up to this time Sophie, inseparable from her mother, had shared her daily life of toil, working under her guidance in the little house, or, still more happily, running by her side in the vineyards. Now Louis withdrew her from this care-free life, and imposed a strict order of day. Early rising was followed by daily Mass in the Church of St. Thibault, within a stone's-throw of the house. On her return home, she retired to the little garret, henceforth her sanctum, and devoted herself to study all day long. Her diversion was to walk to the loved vineyards, where she could look with yearning eyes over the vast expanse of undulating

country and the winding course of the peaceful Yonne. When alone she could still run and jump and play, but when Louis accompanied her, as he too often did, it was with a book in her hand that she walked in silence by his side.

No efforts were made to smooth the rugged paths of learning for her. Her master knew no such devices, and taught her as the college boys were taught. Latin, Greek, Mathematics were her staple food—a man's curriculum. He knew no other. Fresh from the *pays de Latin*, as the colleges were called, to him it was a living language, and the one he thought best suited to those who would serve the world. The daily exercises given to his class of boys were also given to Sophie. She shared their books, so, possibly, the famous Latin Grammar of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, graphically described by a contemporary writer : ' The children dislike it . . . the countless rules are like a black and thorny forest, in which, for five or six years, they grope their way, never knowing where the lost roads lead, bruising and pricking and scratching themselves against obstacles, with no hope of reaching light.' Whatever the book used, Sophie's progress, especially in her classical studies was astonishing. Nothing seemed enough to satisfy the devouring activity of her mind. As a recreation and a reward Louis taught her Spanish and Italian. At first an unwilling pupil, the child had looked askance, with unbelieving eyes, on the books, which she was told were a key to a world of enchantment. But as she crossed the threshold and penetrated more and more deeply into that unknown world, she found it was indeed true. ' There at least there is room to breathe,' she said ; ' the mind

expands as it will, and the heart feels that it lives.' The stream of her eager nature had been turned into a new channel, and she became a passionate lover of books.

That, however, was far from being the end of her brother's action. Never for a moment did he lose sight of that greater destiny he vaguely foresaw for her, and while adorning her mind with the riches of knowledge, he trained her will to submission, and her heart to love.

Still a child, she had resolved to give herself to God, though till she herself became a nun she had never known one. As these great forces took possession of her soul to mould and form her nature, there was a tranquil grandeur about her which made all feel that she was one of those ' little ones of whom is the kingdom of heaven.'

For about three years this quiet work of preparation was carried on, then trouble fell upon the household.

It was 1793, the Revolution was in full swing, and the clergy were being imprisoned for their opinions as the royalists for their birth. Led away for a moment, by the example of his bishop, Loménie de Brienne, while still only a sub-deacon in the Seminary of Sens, Louis Barat had taken the oath to the Civil Constitution of the clergy. But no sooner had Pius VI pronounced against it, in 1790, than he had publicly and courageously withdrawn his adhesion. For some time he had been left unmolested, but persecution was bound to follow. To escape it, he was advised to take refuge in Paris. He was met there by a former schoolfellow, who denounced him to the Committee of Public Safety, and he was arrested.

Led from one prison to another, for two years he daily awaited death. He was saved, or deprived of the martyr's crown, for his sister's sake.

These two years had been a time of anguish in the little home. But for the loving care of Sophie the sorrowing mother would have sunk beneath her cross. Before the doors of the cruel prison had closed upon him Louis had sent to Joigny a token that he was still in safety, and a reminder that they should pray for him. It was a token full of meaning, and might well have reassured them. It was in reality the letters-patent of the life-work of his sister—a picture of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, the first sign ever seen by Sophie of her promised land, indicating as it did the double consecration that was to mark her work for all times.

She was fourteen when she passed into this apprenticeship of sorrow, and its effect upon her was twofold. Under its pressure her need and love of prayer grew greater, and she realised more fully the little worth of passing things. But at the same time her affection for her home circle grew ever deeper, and the bonds which, since her childhood, had bound her soul to God were all unconsciously loosened. The call to religious life, which she still recognised, no longer appeared to her to be clothed with the same charm; while the destruction of all convents and monasteries in France may have well seemed to have withdrawn her ideal from the possible.

Her very gifts were, it seemed, to be an obstacle to her. The qualities which had made her so lovable as a child had increased in power with her growth in years. Her very expressive countenance and

low musical voice attracted all who met her. 'Her picture has remained graven in my memory,' wrote one of her nephews in after years, 'as an impersonation of heavenly wisdom whose name she bore.' She was in fact the idol of her family. We are told by one who knew her in her early days: 'She was admired and made more of than had she been the daughter of a king. Her every wish was forestalled, her will was law.'

On his return to Joigny, after his long captivity, Louis saw at a glance how things were turning. He realised that his sister's vocation would inevitably be stifled in that atmosphere of adulation and tenderness. He resolved to withdraw her from it.

The mere thought of separation raised a storm of protest. Madame Barat declared that no power on earth would make her consent to be separated from her child. Sophie clung to her mother, entreated her protection, and implored her never to listen to such proposals. 'I undertook,' she said in later years, 'to prove to my brother that he was reversing the order of nature, and that the law of love could never desire the separation of a mother from her child.' Louis, though upheld by his father, was obliged to yield for the moment, and to wait.

CHAPTER II

GROWTH IN THE DARK—FORMATION

1779 TO 1800

FEAR had reigned in the little town of Joigny on the night of Sophie's birth. And fear and trouble had been in the world around.

The old order was failing, and strange, unheard-of forces were springing into being. The fire of modern revolution, which has now been 'smouldering beneath the structure of civilisation' for one hundred and forty-five years, was then about to burst forth in all its fury and sweep over the land of France. And on the souls of men fear, with the heavy, cold hand of Jansenism, was laid with its weary weight.

The 'old error,' old as the race—'I feared Thee that Thou wert a hard master'—still lingered in the minds of men, though devotion to the Sacred Heart had been made known to the world for over a hundred years.

Into this troubled world God—or, as she with childish gravity expressed it, 'the fire'—had brought a child. The child was His, and the hour was His own choice. He would offer her a great work—the *one* great work He ever gives to man: to be a docile and willing instrument in the Divine hands for the salvation of the world.

There were mighty warriors in France in the days of Charles the Dauphin, but to drive out the foreign invaders and crown him king, the word of God came to a peasant child as she tended her flocks in the fairy woods of Domremy: 'The Lord hath need of thee; do thou be good,' it said. There were learned people in plenty, and influential and great names in Europe, fit instruments, it would seem, to save the youth of France, threatened with a worse destruction, but to none of them was the message sent, but to the vine-dresser's daughter in Joigny.

The salvation of the world, the one work of God, finds an ever-recurring problem. All times are His times, all hours are His hours. It is always here and always now that He will save His sheep and lead them forth into the eternal pastures.

But the generations of men succeed each other, 'coming forth as a flower, fleeing as a shadow, and never continuing in the same state,' [1] and their dangers, difficulties, and needs vary as they change. Through all He works for His one end. In each succeeding age He chooses instruments, and these are 'of their times' and suffer from its faults and its prejudices and its needs. Saint Madeleine Sophie was to be no exception.

Her mother, sensitive and impressionable as she was, held the severe religious opinions of the day, 'such as were met with at that period among the greater number of pious people.' [2]

She could but give what she had, and while pouring forth on her children, and especially upon

[1] Job 14, 2.

[2] *Life of St. Madeleine Sophie*, vol. i, ch. i, p. 1, by A. Cahier. See also vol. ii, ch. lvi, p. 410.

Louis and Sophie, the true love of a devoted mother, she had trained them in the things of God, as she herself had been trained. On neither was the effect to be lost, but it led to different results and was allowed for different reasons.

Louis was to be one of God's instruments for the moulding of Sophie, but Sophie was for the whole world.

Louis, a brilliant scholar, grew up to be a rigid man. He needed this iron quality in the dangers surrounding him. There were, however, in reality two men in the Abbé Barat, as Monsignor Baunard points out—a mathematician and a poet. Not perhaps so rare a combination as it seems at first sight. The mathematician was more in evidence in his early days. The violence of the persecution he suffered, and the sorrows of his times did not conduce to soften his methods or to brighten his character. ' For a man like him,' wrote Monsignor Baunard, ' there was only one possible way to love his sister—namely, to perfect her, by carving in the pure marble of her nature the image of Christ.' [1]

He had been a hard master to the gentle, happy-natured child of ten or eleven, but the only one in the little household capable of directing her studies.

Still harder did he prove himself when, in 1796, withdrawing her at length from her mother's care, he brought her to Paris to prepare her for some still unknown destiny.

' She had grown up in the sun of her father's vineyard and the shade of her garret study . . . noble and simple of soul, loving in disposition,

[1] *Histoire de Ste. M. Sophie*, vol. i, ch. i, pp. 11, 26.

clinging as her own vines . . . ,' [1] but to Louis, it seemed, not yet 'hardy as they to bear the sharp pruning of trial' and sorrow that would be necessary if any great work were to be done. He dreaded for her all that was very tender and exuberant in expression . . . lest it should unnerve her soul, preoccupy it with emotions and cloud its intimacy with God. And it was, in fact, in this direction that her weakness lay. He would give her the man's heart to guide her woman's thought, that she might do, as she said she longed to, 'great things for God.'

'The Bible, the Fathers of the Church, and stiff theological treatises' replaced the classics she had learned to love. An unremitting application was demanded by the master, who carefully avoided every sign of approbation, and punished in the roughest fashion the mistakes of his patient pupil. The gold was indeed being fashioned in the furnace.

She needed, or rather God needed in her both breadth and depth of intellect adorned with learning; strength and tenacity of will; the perfection of a woman's suffering courage; and, over all, the attractive qualities of true childhood—humility, simplicity, and unquestioning trustfulness.

A present offered lovingly to her brother was thrown into the fire. He was generous to her only in the permission to practise penance. He thought fit to subject her to interminable examinations of conscience; to her aspirations after sanctity he coldly answered 'To that you can never attain.'

The chisel, indeed, was hard and cold, pitiless

[1] *Society of the Sacred Heart*, by Janet Stuart.

tempered steel ; it seemed capable of destroying all. But the hand in which it was held was the hand of Love. The blows struck were hard, but never too hard, and the roughness of the instrument broke no line of beauty in the model designed by the Master.

The direct and natural issue, the logical outcome of this training, should have been to produce a goodness that was full of fear ; narrow, drawn in upon itself, shrinking from contact with the world. It *should* have given birth to a devotion fitted only for the very few, that would cry out for assurance and seek paths in the valleys and in the safe-trodden ways in the plain. Good, but only for herself, sad with the sorrows of the world, the sorrows of Christ, and seeking at most to repair humbly and faithfully in some corner. Such to human prevision should have been the necessary and inevitable result.

But the fire that no waters can quench was in the soul of Sophie.

The seal of God on any work in this world seems just to lie in this, that the natural and inevitable issue, according to our human judgment, does not follow, does not result. The accurate calculations have erred ! They have overlooked some hidden factor, some secret alchemy has been at work, and the result is the unexpected, and often what we would have said was the impossible. The seal bears the sign of a paradox, and though it was set on the Church from the outset, it has never ceased to surprise.

Crushed and almost done to death her soul should have been. Her stream of life should have flowed henceforth with subdued motion in the deep-hewn valleys. But when at length this period of

her training was accomplished she was found upon the heights, her light still tranquilly burning, her ideal as wide as the world. The prayer of the timorous and fear-haunted soul is: 'Give me only a work that will be in proportion to my grace, no venture, no risk, no danger!' But the prayer of Saint Madeleine Sophie was that of the one true Church: 'Give me grace in proportion to the work. . . . *All grace* to save *all* sinners!'

To conquer an evil, or to fight against one, we must first know it. That is a truism. But it was exemplified in God's training of Saint Madeleine Sophie. She was to give a message of love to the world. She was to tell a distrustful and doubting world that the Christ of the Gospels, the Christ of sinners, the Christ of children, the Christ of the poor was still the Christ of to-day. That His thoughts were thoughts of kindness, mercy, love. That it was with these He would redeem the world.

Safe sheltered within the everlasting arms, God let the evil tendencies of the day press on her, wound her even, but never dim her light. And between the gloomy precipices and through the sunless forests of those days the clear stream of her life flowed on guided by God through byways known only to Him, out to the ocean of love. They had thought to hold her in, secured, confined, and in the moment when the task seemed finished, the rock-bound stream controlled, it had escaped them, and was free for ever. Her life henceforth was one more paradox of Christianity.

Hurt she had been, but the pain was for herself alone, for she had, as it were, ventured her spiritual life to win souls to know God in His mercy, love,

and goodness. And the reward! 'She was one of those souls,' wrote Père Bainvel, in his great work on Devotion to the Sacred Heart, 'who undoubtedly have helped most in spreading this devotion throughout the world.'

'A soul that is to win others or to train them,' wrote Father Varin to her in 1806, 'must be great and wide as the ocean. Saint Francis Xavier undertook to convert the world because his soul was greater than the world.' And again, 'You promised me that Our Lord should find in you one according to His Heart, a great and generous soul, a soul always ready to enter into His designs, without being astounded at their difficulty.' Such was the soul of Saint Madeleine Sophie. Her desires and hopes knew no limits but the will of God. Her courage and confidence were measured by the same measure. Love and joy became the mainspring of her life.

To all these calls to the 'impossible,' the first answer that comes tremblingly to human lips is the 'How can this be done?' and the second, 'Behold, the handmaid of the Lord.' When this has been uttered in its fullest sense, by what Saint Francis of Sales calls 'an incomparable act of resignation,' the work is accomplished by the overshadowing of the spirit of God.

When Saint Madeleine Sophie accepted her life's work through the instrumentality of Father Varin, there came to her an intelligence of the Institute that was not her own, that bore no personal impress, but was received as a gift from heaven. This is strikingly seen in the many thousand letters that have been preserved, dating from the first days of

the Order. The same maturity of spirit breathes through all. Long years of experience seem to lie behind the earliest, and their teaching to be equally apposite a century later. It is seen too in her interpretation of Devotion to the Sacred Heart, an interpretation the choice of which bears the seal of God's work.

She found this devotion expressed in the Liturgy of the Church by the Mass *Miserebitur*, given to the world in 1765: 'He will have mercy according to the multitude of His mercies.' A Mass in which the plaintive pleadings of the wounded Heart predominate, and in which the cry of the soul re-echoes the penitential Psalms: 'I will give thanks to Thee, O Lord, for Thou wast angry with me; Thy wrath is turned away and Thou hast comforted me. . . .' This should have seemed to her to be the expression of her inmost soul!

She accepted it, and for fifty-three years it was the Liturgy in use in her Society. But she had seen visions from the beginning, and dreamt dreams, and their fulfilment was not found thus expressed. There was another aspect of the devotion which she had learnt in the cenacle of her soul, and in 1853 the existence of a second Mass, already granted to Portugal, Venice, and Ireland, became known to her. 'That is how I have understood it,' she exclaimed, the inward life of the Sacred Heart 'with all its expression of itself, with its tenderness, its splendours, and the glow of its sanctuary fire.'[1] She saw in it the glory of the reign of Christ, and from henceforth the triumphant 'Go forth, ye daughters of Sion, and see King Solomon crowned in the diadem

[1] *Society of the Sacred Heart*, by Janet Stuart.

wherewith His Mother crowned him in the day of his espousals and in the day of the joy of His heart,' replaced the sad strain of the *Miserebitur* in the convents of her Order. 'I will give thanks to Thee . . . for Thou wast angry with me ; Thy wrath is turned away' gave way to the exultant cry of the Apostle 'To me the least of all the Saints, is given this grace, to preach . . . the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to enlighten all men, that they may see what is the dispensation of the mystery . . . hidden from eternity in God.'

To the invitation 'O all ye that pass by attend and see if there be sorrow like to my sorrow' was opposed the glad-bringing tidings 'Tell ye the daughter of Sion, behold thy King cometh to thee, meek. . . .'

The sorrowful Gospel of the pierced side gave way to the discourse on love, 'I have called you friends.' To the anxious pleading 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all He hath done for thee' was opposed the glad cry 'O Lord God, in the simplicity of my heart I have joyfully offered all these things. . . .' And in place of the 'Communion' 'My heart hath expected reproach and misery' we find 'O taste and see that the Lord is sweet. . . .'

All that, with God's guidance, she had desired and dreamt of for her Institute she found crystallised in the words of this Mass. It was the ideal of her life realised, the lesson that she had been taught. 'When God designs a man to do a work,' says Saint Bernard, 'He furnishes him with all he needs, *divinely*.' So it had been done to Saint Madeleine Sophie.

Out of the severity of her training, in that long growth underground, had come love and trust unbounded. She had done the one thing needful, surrendered herself to God and His instruments. 'Surrendered, co-operated, waited, trusted.'[1] He was to do the rest. And writing to her when her work was just beginning, Father Varin said: 'Our Lord will not forget the fragile little bark that has put out to sea at His word. He will remember the pilot and the crew who have set sail in simple trust in Him, with the hope of rendering Him service.'

To render Him service she would be greatly daring in the years to come. But deep down in her soul, beyond the reach of storm and trouble, had been implanted, as an immovable conviction, the realisation of her relationship to God as that of an instrument in the hands of the Divine Worker. There is nothing more impersonal than an instrument in the hand that uses it. And thus it was with Saint Madeleine Sophie. Her impersonality in carrying out her life's work was one of her most marked characteristics, and she was to impress that mark upon her Order.

[1] *Highways and By-ways in the Spiritual Life*, by Janet Stuart.

CHAPTER III

(I) THE HERB BECOMES A TREE—FOUNDATIONS

1800 TO 1815

THE instrument then was ready, fashioned by a long and hard fashioning to the mind of the Master. It was now to be put to use. She had walked through fire and stood waiting on the Will of God. It came to her through the voice of Father Varin.

She had broken with the world, her own world, which, as a great French writer had pointed out, ' is *not* to break with humanity, but rather to be at the same time one with humanity and with God. The first thing found by the soul that separates itself from all, to belong to God, is the love of mankind. Those who love the world do not love the *race* . . for the spirit of the world is always sectarian. . . . The tendency of any age, and the tendency of the human race, are two distinct things,' he says ; ' this last is the law, the other is the disturbance of that law. The one is the providential and regular movement of the race, the other a capricious and perverse movement.' [1]

To break with the spirit of the age, then, is to live tenfold more with the true life of the race—a fact

[1] Gratry, *Les Sources*.

to which the lives of the saints bear witness. It is to see the world through the eyes of God Who made it, loved it, and remakes it daily. It is to work as He works for the end He has set for His own creatures. 'There is but one Pedagogue of the human race,' says Saint Clement of Alexandria, 'He Who calls Himself the Shepherd.' He alone knows the creatures He has made, and, through the million obstacles opposed to Him by the perverse will of man, must still by secret, devious ways work out His will. He stands within the shadow keeping watch, and as age follows age, each with its special needs, He Who has been made man to save all ages shows His friends that which at each moment is most necessary for His end. He teaches them the aspect of Truth which will respond to the needs of the day.

The Revolution of 1789 had swept away all trace of Christian education in France. To repair this grievous loss became the imperative necessity of the hour. To stay the current of the wild stream of ideas which had flooded the land, and was about to overflow the world, was impossible—as impossible as it has been in the Russian revolution of to-day. There was only one remedy, it seemed to thinking men, the long, slow-working but sure remedy of education, and they turned their thoughts to the children. If they could not stem the flood, they could prepare safe outlets for its waters. New methods must meet new needs. And in this regenerating work the Church, as always, took the leading part.

From a document drawn up by a revolutionary tribunal we learn that, in 1789, there were some 60,000 religious (men and women) in France, living

in 4000 monasteries and convents, many of whom were devoted to the education of children. Numbers were condemned to the guillotine, many more died of want and misery, the rest were dispersed and their houses pillaged or burnt.

Among those who had the courage to enter the arena anew was a holy priest, Léonor de Tournely, one of the many driven out of France. His ambition was to enter the Society of Jesus, which had been suppressed some thirty years before. Its resurrection was earnestly desired, and while awaiting the withdrawal of the Bull of Suppression, de Tournely determined to found an Order of the Fathers of the Sacred Heart, with the avowed intention of uniting it to the Society of Saint Ignatius as soon as it was possible to do so.

But it was not enough to provide for the training of the men of the future ; de Tournely realised that without some similar provision for women, his work was but half done. How it was to be completed he did not at first see, nor was he destined to accomplish it. In prayer, however, God made known to him that the new Order he had just founded would itself cease to exist as a separate unit, as he desired, but not before it had been the means of organising another Society—a Society of religious women, to whose hands it was God's will to entrust, not alone a share in the work of Christian education, but in some way 'the very censer with the Sacred fire of His love for men. . . . It was to have a twofold spirit, that of prayer and sacrifice, to bear the name of the Sacred Heart, to dwell in that sanctuary, to carry that banner.' 'The Sacred Heart was to be the one shelter of its members, their food, their

warmth, their light, their cooling stream, their element, their way, their life, their all.' [1]

De Tournely died in 1797, confiding his hopes and dreams to Father Varin, bidding him fear nothing, for ' it *will* be . . . a little nothing, a mere mustard seed,' he said, ' but with a mission of regeneration for the world.'

Father Varin received the trust and waited. Three years later he met with Sophie Barat. Her brother had entered the new Order of priests, and on asking for admittance had mentioned that one tie only bound him to the world, ' a little sister ' ; she too, he added, desired to enter religious life, probably in a Carmelite convent, but as yet nothing had been decided. The words struck Father Varin in a way that he could not explain. The conviction flashed across his mind that here was at last the foundation-stone needed. He questioned Louis about the little sister, and the unexpected answers he received seemed to point to the truth of his sudden forecast. ' Simplicity, hardihood, and high spirit ' might have been looked for in a child of the Burgundian countryside, but how was it that she had received a University education ? This the Abbé Barat could only explain by saying that he had seen that her gifts were of no common order, and had felt bound to train them to the utmost in view of some possible destiny he had always vaguely foreseen.

A few days later a very fragile, retiring, shy girl, dressed in her Burgundian peasant's dress, stood before Father Varin. For a moment his faith was staggered. ' I said to myself, what a foundation-

[1] Words of Father Varin to Geneviève Deshayes, one of the first members of the Order.

stone! And yet it was upon her that God willed to raise the edifice. . . . I had before me the grain of mustard seed that was to grow into a tree with wide-spreading branches.' Like Ananias of Damascus, when God bade him take Saul of Tarsus as a fellow-worker, he doubted, not knowing that the Divine artificer had Himself fashioned the stone. But the answer was again the same: 'Go thy way; this child is to Me a vessel of election to carry the love of my Heart throughout the world.'

Under Father Varin's guidance Saint Madeleine Sophie entered on a new spiritual world. 'You must learn,' he said to her, 'to know the mind and Heart of Jesus, and give yourself up entirely to His guidance.' The words summed up the two great lessons she was to embody in her rule, and which till death she taught her followers. 'This is the burden of our song,' he wrote again, 'courage, confidence, and complete surrender of all into God's hands.'

Father Varin prayed long and earnestly before venturing to dispose of the life before him. When he had learnt to know Sophie well, he one day asked her what she wished to do with her life.

'Serve God as a Carmelite' came the answer.

'No, that is not your vocation. The gifts God has given you and the education you have received point in another direction,' and then he disclosed in glowing words the plan of Father de Tournely. 'That is the kind of life to which you are called.'

'I will think it over,' she said gently. But there was no longer any room for doubt or hesitation in Father Varin's mind. 'That is not the thing to do; when God's Will is known our part is to obey.'

The words brought a great light to her mind, and with her acceptance the Society began.

A great educational scheme had been set on foot. But the seal that stamped it as the work of God was on it from the outset. The obvious means to the end, obvious to human prudence, were wholly lacking—money, an organised scheme, and competent workers. Of worldly wealth Sophie possessed five francs. God, however, does not ask for much, it is said, only for all that we have. He *can* feed the multitude without any help, but He will not till a child has given Him a few loaves and fishes. This enterprise was not man's but God's, and the wealth of the world was at His call. Many houses were standing empty in France, which were in a special way His own ; homes of the religious driven out in the Revolution. These He would lend to shelter His new work.

Three companions joined themselves to Sophie—Mademoiselle Loquet, Octavie Bailly, and Marguerite Maillard. ' In those first days of the Society,' said Father Varin, speaking to later generations in the Order, ' I used to speak to the mothers every day after Mass of our plans and hopes. One of the first questions discussed was the spirit of the Society. The answer came quickly. Unanimously we all exclaimed " Generosity." A strong, generous love for Jesus Christ, it seemed to us, ought to characterise those who were consecrated to His Heart. We agreed therefore to banish from our midst all pettiness, all self-seeking, and those likes and dislikes which are the defects of cowardly and divided souls. The Heart of Our Lord calls only for great-souled service.'

In a recent Life of Saint Madeleine Sophie the writer comments on this scene as follows[1]: 'The Society of the Sacred Heart was faithful to its first principles. Generosity remained its distinctive mark, the seal which it set on the souls which it formed. Its end may be summed up as the perfecting, the completing of the work of God, who created woman to be strength, light, and tenderness: strength to help, light to guide, and tenderness to give herself. To *give* was the distinguishing mark of the Apostleship of Our Lord, and this gift of self *usque in finem* was to be impressed by the religious on the souls of their children, to whom they were to teach unceasingly that generosity of a love which would spare neither good will, nor effort, nor sacrifice. . . . The real meaning of apostleship is to go out of self, to give self when, where and as God wishes, to be all to all as God is all to all. . . .

'To raise up crushed or weary souls, to multiply the number of souls of good will, to reveal the love of Christ to all around, and not only to do this herself, but to form other souls to do it, such was the vocation to which Saint Madeleine Sophie responded when on November 21, 1800, the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lady in the Temple, she consecrated herself to the Heart of Jesus, to love Him without measure in the labour of winning souls to Him.'

A year later, on November 12, 1801, Sophie arrived at Amiens 'on a cold and foggy day' to begin life in a little house in a street with the singular name Martin Bleu-Dieu, derived, it is said, from a

[1] *Mère Barat*, by M. Quenot, in the series 'Les grands Catholiques des XIX^e^ et XX^e^ Siècles.' Publications 'Lumen.' Dijon.

picture of God the Father clothed in blue, which hung in a niche in the wall of the house Martin. 'We were like people feeling their way in the dark,' wrote Mother Deshayes; 'it was God's way with us He always acted thus, just lifting the veil that we might see our path step by step, but not beyond. When Father Varin came, which was but seldom, everything fell into shape. We felt forcibly that he had the spirit of God for our guidance.'

A school had already been opened in the house, and this was now entrusted to the new Society. The first Superior was Mademoiselle Loquet; she was already advanced in years, and her life had been given to good works. It soon became clear, however, that she had no call to religious life. 'Whatever her faults may have been, and even on account of them,' said Mother Deshayes in her description of the beginnings of the Order, 'she did much for us by keeping us in a spirit of childlike simplicity, which made us live under God's hand without knowing whither He was leading us.' Her presence, moreover, had given Sophie a necessary breathing space in which, in hiddenness and humility, she was each day 'winning nearer to the deep of God, sinking more into Truth and Justice,' learning to know Him in Whom she had believed, and thus being apprenticed to the work awaiting her.

On December 21, 1802, Father Varin assembled the little Community now deprived of its Superior by the departure of Mademoiselle Loquet. 'I spoke to them about Our Lord,' he wrote, 'and then told them that I wished to make sure that they were sufficiently instructed to teach Christian doctrine to their children. So I put them some questions

on the Catechism. To one about the Sacraments, to another about grace, and so on. When it was Sister Sophie's turn, I said: "You are the youngest, and I must give you the easiest question. Why did God make you?" "To know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him," she answered. "What do you mean by serving God?" I asked. "Doing His Will," . . . She would have continued, but it was enough for me. I interrupted her. "To serve God is to do His Will, you say. You wish to serve Him?" "Yes, Father." "Well, His Will is that you should be Superior." She was only twenty-three. The words came as a thunderbolt to her. She fell on her knees and besought us with tears to have pity on her. But we were inexorable.'

For sixty-two years she was to bear the burden.

Three years later she was elected Superior General by the narrow majority of one vote. The fate of the Society had been for a moment in the balance. The choice had lain between the somewhat worldly wisdom of Madame Baudemont and the wholly supernatural calling of Mother Barat.

Writing a few months later Father Varin said: 'I know that you will have a great deal to suffer before the Society is solidly established, but nothing alarms me, because I know also that Our Lord will give you a heart larger than all that you will suffer, and such a heart can obtain all things from Him. I congratulate you on having entered on your present path, and I congratulate myself on having helped to direct you to it. In no other course of life would you have the thousandth part to bear of what awaits you here, only remember that your

courage and faith must be steeped in tender and loving confidence in Our Lord.'

Before this date, however, a more permanent abode had been found for the little Society in an old house of the Oratorians of Cardinal de Berulle, and here on Michaelmas Day, 1804, the 'Cradle of the Society,' as it has ever since been called, was established. There it was destined to remain undisturbed for about one hundred years.

This was the first of the one hundred and eleven houses which Saint Madeleine Sophie was to found before her death. Of these ninety-three were still standing in 1865. Eight had been closed in revolutionary upheavals, two by unfriendly governments. Six had been proved to be unsuitable for the works of the Society, and one, to the bitter sorrow of the Saint, had separated itself from the parent tree.

But all this was the secret of the future, and no little courage was required on her part when, at the word of Father Varin, she now set out for Grenoble, a distance of some 600 miles, to open a second house. 'There is no question yet of dividing you into four parts, but only into two,' he wrote. 'What are we to do! you will exclaim. Our one little household is so poor, and if the whole is worth so little, what will the half be! O you of little faith! He will make each half worth the whole; only trust Him.'

It was God's way with His work, and has been so ever since. 'Never more than a drop of oil in the little earthen vessel, and at the sign of the prophet this vessel was not filled . . . but as the drops were poured out they renewed themselves in proportion to the need of the moment,' and with this utter dependence, first accepted, then loved, the

confidence and restful peace in the saint's soul grew ever deeper.

On November 21 three novices—Sisters de Charbonnel, du Terrail, and Debrosse—took their vows in the Chapel of the Oratory; the latter, with Sister Marguerite, was to accompany the Saint on her journey. They left Amiens the next day, confiding all to the care of Madame Baudemont.

On one of the spurs of the Alps, close to Grenoble, dominating the sunny and fertile valley of the Iser, the Order of the Visitation of Our Lady had once served God. Saint Jeanne de Chantal and Saint Francis of Sales had prayed within the walls of Sainte Marie d'en Haut. Scarcely more than a ruin, but still a sacred spot, the old convent of the Mother was offered to shelter the new work of her Son.

There Philippine Duchesne awaited her new Superior. 'You will find some people there,' wrote Father Varin, 'but *one* especially . . . if she were quite alone at the ends of the earth, you ought to go in search of her.'

Fourteen years later Mother Duchesne led out the first colony of the Society to America. Her soul was of the same fibre as that of Saint Madeleine Sophie, and from the first moment they understood each other. 'It is impossible to describe the impression our new Mother made upon us, so young as she still is, yet so full of wisdom and maturity,' wrote Mother Duchesne, and, like Mother Deshayes, she felt 'like a person who comes into a house that has been furnished for her, where all her tastes have been studied and foreseen and everything planned to suit them. She fell in love with the Society at

first sight and loved it as if she had known it for years.' Generosity was the characteristic of her own soul, a generosity which had its source in an intensity of personal love for Our Lord and found its expression in boundless zeal for the salvation of souls.

The next foundation was of special interest in the annals of the Order. Its story was written in detail by the Saint, and it was there that she established the first noviceship.

In the course of his missionary journeys in France, Father Varin was offered a house for the Society at Poitiers. It was an old building on the outskirts of the town, known as the Abbey of the Feuillants. Built in the reign of Louis XIII for a reform of the Cistercian monks, it had been sacked in the Revolution, the church destroyed and much of the monastery left in ruins. But the place had been a home of prayer, and the spirit of prayer and solitude seemed to pervade it. It is believed that the convent there established was specially loved by Our Lord.

It was on her way to Poitiers, at this time, that a miracle occurred which greatly increased the Saint's confidence and assurance that she was being guided by God. While at Grenoble she had become seriously ill; all seemed to point to the return of the terrible cancer which had threatened her life in the first days of her superiority at Amiens. But, in spite of her sufferings, she set out on the troublesome journey; what followed she herself wrote to Mother Duchesne:

'I have a fresh proof to give you of the goodness of God to us. . . . You know in what a state

I left you. When I arrived at Lyons, the heat of the journey had made me more ill than last year. I was away from you, my dear good Samaritan, and felt as if no one could do anything for me. I complained to Our Lord, and told Him how difficult and impossible the journey would be if I were so ill. Having done this, I was at peace. How could I fail to be certain that all would be well, when I remembered the many other proofs that He had given me of His love and protection? Before I left Lyons, my illness had disappeared, without any remedies. I am completely cured. I keep nothing from you, my dearest, but let this be for you and your Superior alone.' The cure was final, no trace of the disease ever reappeared.

To cross France in those days was no easy matter, especially if the destination lay off the regular coach roads, as was the case in this first journey from Grenoble to Poitiers. 'At Lyons,' wrote the Saint in her journal, 'we took the coach to Moulins; . . . when it stopped in the villages, I talked with the children, and found them in such ignorance of God, that I longed to stay and teach them to know and love Him.' At Moulins the coach road turned off, and it was necessary to find another means of conveyance. The post-boy of the district was an eccentric character. 'His sixty years of life had in no way sobered his love of adventure. He enjoyed any variety in his monotonous days, and was delighted when his cart upset or ran into a ditch.' The realisation that with passengers he must run fewer risks made him very unwilling to take any. After refusing for a day and a half, he at length agreed to set out and take

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Mother Barat to Limoges. A terrible hurricane had blown the night before, and uprooted trees lay all along the way.

At Limoges the Canon of the Cathedral received the Saint and her companion very kindly, and undertook to find them a conveyance going to Poitiers. It turned out to be a waggon laden with goods; a little room had been made between the bundles, and some hay deposited as seats. 'Our driver Cadence had a second waggon driven by his servant Jacques; they both went at a foot's pace. . . . At least we were free to do as we liked; we could read, pray, sing. On the evening of the third day's journey, Cadence announced that he could go no further, his waggon needed repairs. I was not sorry to spend the morning where we were, in a little country village. . . .' But the repairs took so long, that at last, being ashamed to present himself, Cadence made off with the second waggon, and left Jacques to break the news to the travellers and drive them on the next day. Poitiers was at last reached some ten days after leaving Lyons.

This was but one of many picturesque and delightful journeys in France and Italy, before railways came to change the face of the earth. The discomfort and weariness is forgotten, and a halo of romance seems to linger round them. We feel somehow convinced that a postulant who should present herself, as Mademoiselle de Charbonnel at Amiens in 1803, on a white horse, splashed with mud to the eyes, half lost in a huge French saddle, in which she had wedged herself in with her trunk, having made a long journey thus from 'the depths of Auvergne,' would be of better metal than ourselves.

Two postulants were awaiting Saint Madeleine Sophie's arrival at Poitiers—Lydia Chobelet du Bois-Boucher and Josephine Bigeu. 'My companion, Mother Girard, presented me to them, for I could not introduce myself, and this was all the assurance that I could give them, that I was indeed the person they expected. . . . They received us politely, as people for whose arrival they had had no time to grow impatient, for we had set off at once! And they sent for Father Lambert.'

By his advice the Saint went on to Bordeaux, where the call to join the new Society had been widely heard. 'During the few days we were there,' she wrote, 'all those who, under Father Enfantin's [1] direction, wished to consecrate themselves to God, came to beg to be admitted into the Society. The number increased daily, until I had not a minute's rest. . . . I could not take all back with me, for they were over thirty in number, but eight who had been living together under a little rule were received at once.'

For two years after her return from Bordeaux, Saint Madeleine Sophie's work was within the Abbey of the Feuillants. Her time and thought and prayer was given to the formation of the novices. But while she was engaged in training them for their future life, a great work was going on in her own soul. Mother Thérèse Maillucheau, one of the most famous of these novices, wrote: 'There the Society, still so little at that time, was formed within her heart. . . . God unveiled to her some of the secrets of the future, and prepared her

[1] Fathers Lambert and Enfantin were at this time members of the same Society as Father Varin; all became Jesuits later on.

by gifts of grace and strength for its many trials and labours.'

It was on Saturday, September 6, 1806, that the Saint returned to Poitiers. 'The next day but one was the Feast of Our Lady's Birthday,' she notes in her journal, and as all were most eager to begin their noviceship, I fixed on that day for the opening. . . . On the eve I spoke to them of the dispositions with which they should enter the noviceship: Generosity, to give all to God with no reserve. Courage not to be stopped by little difficulties, nor troubled by miseries and defects . . . and great confidence in God Who, having called them, would never fail them. . . . Joy at the thought of all He had done for them.'

From the story of this first noviceship, written by the Saint and her companions, we gather the following details. There is a simplicity, freshness, and fragrance about them that belongs to the youth of ideals.

There was much individuality about these first members of the Order; they had been cast in no common mould. The one stamp, however, that all bore was that given to many women in France in the days of the great Revolution. They had suffered, faced death, and been faithful.

'We had instructions on the rule twice a week,' wrote the Saint, but these were supplemented by almost daily conferences on the spiritual life, and in preparation for the Feasts of the Church. About two months after the opening of the noviceship the Superior was obliged to go to Angoulême for a few days. The note in the journal shows how strong already was the bond of affection between

her and her daughters. 'I spoke to them of detachment from creatures, having in view our coming separation, though it was to be but for a few days. I foresaw that they would suffer from it, all was as yet so new in our life. But on this point it was as if I had preached in a desert ; they all showed the greatest distress, and I could see that my words had had but little effect.' On a similar occasion she wrote a little later : 'I prepared them for our separation as well as I could . . . though they are in reality far advanced on the path to perfection, on this point they are incorrigible.'

Each novice had her share in the work of the house, but their time was given chiefly to prayer and study. Mother Maillucheau writes : 'Our Mother's instructions turned frequently on charity. "I have no idea," she said one day, "what God means to do with each one of you in the future, but whatever may be your position, I entreat you with all my power to keep charity ever living in your midst. . . . Let no sacrifice seem too great to cement it into our life. . . . If we can keep the bonds of charity untouched, they alone will support the Society, which is so little and weak in itself. . . . I wish I could make known to you all the light God gives me on this essential point : Union is to be our strength, we must keep this Divine union among us at the cost of any sacrifice."'

And another day, speaking in the same strain, she added : 'I have much to tell you, but you cannot bear it now, later God Himself will teach you what you ought to know. . . . In His goodness He is storing up great things for our Society, still only in its childhood.'

There were times in those days, so full of happiness, that the weariness, suffering, and privations which abounded seemed of no account. Moments when the Saint called to her one or other group of novices and shared with them something of the secrets of her intercourse with God. This inner life she revealed to them as the pearl of great price to be bought at any cost.

In the garden at Poitiers, there was a little oratory dedicated to Saint Joseph; it was a favourite place of prayer for the Saint. There she made her retreats—retreats of ten or fourteen days, 'spending her time in closest converse with God. . . . She came back to the house for the night, and we (the novices) only saw her in the Chapel, almost hidden behind the altar. Early in the morning we found her there again, deep in prayer, and we wondered among ourselves how the night had been spent. . . . There was about her something of Our Lord, which went straight to all our hearts.' Of one such retreat, made in March 1807, the Saint wrote: 'I would gladly have prolonged it, but after thirteen days I had to return to the novices; they told me they could stand it no longer.' And of another: 'Towards the middle of July I wished to make a retreat, not only for the sake of prayer, but that I might get the necessary peace and leisure to write several letters . . . for I rarely got a moment's quiet for that kind of work. I told the Sisters of my wish, and as it was only for a few days they did not mind. However, once I found myself in retreat I stayed there six days. I went to the little Chapel of Saint Joseph in the garden. During the day all were most considerate and refrained from coming

near me, but in the evenings they came down and prowled round my solitude, and as they passed, one after another had something to say. . . . So at last I had to leave it and take up my work with them again.'

The remembrance of this foundation was always dear to the heart of the Saint. 'She often spoke to us of the beginnings of the Society,' wrote a novice of the Rue Monsieur some thirty years later. 'And one day, when she had been describing the foundation at Poitiers, she said, "Who will give me back that noviceship at the Feuillants?" and added, "You will do it, dear children." 'The noviceship is the ante-chamber of heaven,' she often said; 'if the world knew what our happiness is, out of sheer envy it would invade our retreat, and the time of the fathers of the desert would return, when the solitudes were more populous than the cities.'

Belley, Niort, Gand in the Abbey of Doorseele, and Cuignières in a farm-house, next opened houses of the Order.

Then came a pause. An episode in the history of the Society occurred which seems to have found an echo in the story of almost every Order established in the last century for the purpose of education. The first great storm arose to test the growth of the tree, and to try the strength of the bond of charity, in which, as the Saint had been taught at Poitiers, lay all its hope.

CHAPTER IV

(2) THE HERB BECOMES A TREE—THE GROWTH IS TESTED—FOUNDATIONS

It was evident to many people in 1808 that the Society of the Sacred Heart had the possibilities of a great enterprise, and there were then, as at all times, clever and ambitious people who felt within themselves the power to make it succeed. But their views and methods were ordinary human views; the best and shortest and most obvious means should be taken to reach the end. They could see no 'value in things that seemed useless and incomprehensible, such as hidden life and long delays'; they wanted 'not to beat about the bush, but to go straight at it.' Their views, they would have said, were the views of common sense. They would crush through all to gain the end, but Truth spares the smouldering flax, and goes a long way round to avoid hurting the broken reed. To Madame Baudemont, the local Superior at Amiens, and especially to Monsieur de Saint Estève, her chaplain, Saint Madeleine Sophie appeared incomprehensible. Her gentleness, meekness, and patience, her power of waiting on the Will of God, seemed to them to indicate weakness and incapacity In their eyes she was an obstacle to the work, and in their zeal for its advancement they laid their

plans to get rid of her. Father Varin appeared to them to be little better; he had let eight years pass in testing the life to be lived in the Order, instead of fixing its final form in clearly defined rules and constitutions. This Monsieur de Saint Estève determined to remedy.

When Saint Madeleine Sophie returned to Amiens in 1808 she found, to her surprise, that many modifications of the rules and customs had been introduced into the house of which she, though Superior General, had heard nothing. Completely setting aside all personal considerations she showed no displeasure, but meekly accepted all that she could, and silently entrusted everything into God's hands. Friends urged the necessity of firmness, reminded her that she was Superior General, and begged her to exert her authority. But an interior voice had given her another lead. It was confirmed by the words of Père de Clorivière, for long Provincial of the Jesuits. 'Pray, suffer, wait, and hope,' he wrote to her, and she followed this counsel to the letter. For eight years she watched in silence what seemed to be the destruction of the work she had been bidden to do. It was God's work, and she knew His ways; some of their secrets had been made known to her at Poitiers. She was not wanted at Amiens, but could not be wholly set aside. Her long solitary hours were spent in a little tribune that looked into the chapel. Her eyes rested on the Tabernacle; there she waited, leaving all issues steadfastly to God, while the storm raged round her.

In 1811 Monsieur de Saint Estève's self-appointed work on the Constitutions was nearly finished, and was at last shown to the Saint. There

was no trace of the inspiration of Father de Tournely in it. Devotion to the Sacred Heart, and even the very name, was absent from these pages. With the calmness of a soul that seeks for nothing but the Will of God, realising fully the end to which its adoption must lead, she yet refrained from discussion or expostulation, and having referred the matter of the Constitutions to Father Varin, her brother, and *Monsieur de Saint Estève,* she left Amiens, and for four long years went from house to house, striving to keep alive in all hearts that devotion which she knew was the true life of the Society.

Father Varin could not approve of the work set before him, but, in spite of this, copies of the new Constitutions were sent round to the houses. It met with dislike and disapproval everywhere. But still she waited, and kept silence. As the months rolled on, it became clear that, except in the house of Amiens, where nearly all had been trained by Madame Baudemont, the religious still clung to their first ideal. In the autumn of 1813 it seemed to the Saint that the time had come to complete the true work on the Constitutions which had been already begun by Father Varin, and which had been the subject of their thoughts and prayers for years. He was staying at the Château de Chevroz, near Besançon, with his sister, and thither Mother Barat went.

The house, an old turreted manor-house of the fifteenth century, surrounded by a moat, stood a stone's-throw from the village church. There Father Varin said his daily Mass, and with the Saint spent hours in prayer for light and guidance

on the work before them. One who was then living in the château wrote : ' Every day, some hours after Mass, I used to see Father Varin and Mother Barat walking up and down under the great trees near the house, deep in thought. Father Varin had a notebook and pencil ; they walked slowly and stopped from time to time while the Father wrote, crossed out what he had written and wrote again. They must be writing and correcting the Constitutions, I thought. What charity there must be in a work done by minds and hearts on fire with the love of the Heart of Jesus, for this is the dwelling-place of Father Varin and of Mother Barat.' [1]

Leaving Besançon in November the Saint returned to Amiens. ' I am in my old quarters once more,' she wrote, ' but I am not at rest here.' The storm was indeed about to break. Monsieur de Saint Estève was now established in Rome as Secretary to the French Embassy, a position he had obtained on the fall of the Empire and the return of the Bourbons. From that post of vantage it seemed that he would be able to carry all before him, and force his own Constitutions on the Society. He at once set about establishing a house of *his Order* in Rome, and wrote to Father Varin, Father de Clorivière, and Mother Barat, urging them to renounce their opposition, as Rome was favourable to his scheme. He had been appointed, so he said, sole Superior of the new Institute, which Father Varin's inertness and Mother Barat's incapacity had nearly ruined.

' The storm has burst that I have long watched gathering over your head,' wrote Father Varin,

[1] Father Jeantier, S.J., then a child of twelve.

'and, I may add, over my own. If you, for your share have had one letter, I have had three, each outdoing the other. Once again courage and confidence. Whoever asks for the Cross, and like you feels unable to live without it, must know that it reaches to the four quarters of the globe: north, south, east, and west. . . . Do not call on me to share it with you. I am the first to receive it, and when I pass it on to you, I still find it whole and entire in my arms. May Our good Master be blessed for ever for it.' Such opponents were in reality invincible, as Monsieur de Saint Estève was to find.

All, however, had not their strength to wait and trust. The convent at Ghent found itself in circumstances of peculiar difficulty. Mgr. de Broglie, bishop of the diocese, who had braved the anger of Napoleon in 1811, in defence of the interests of the Church, had been condemned to several years' imprisonment at Vincennes. The fall of the emperor had restored him to his diocese, but had not appeased the anger of his flock. French influence and French institutions were viewed with disfavour. The troubles caused by the innovations of Monsieur de Saint Estève brought matters to a crisis; they were looked on as an outburst of Gallicanism, and by the decision of the Bishop, Doorseele was withdrawn from the Society. The Belgian nuns remained under Mother de Peneranda, the French returned to Amiens. This sorrow was almost more than the Saint could bear, and it seemed as if in reality it was to be the last sacrifice she was asked to make, for the day after the return of her nuns she was seized with a violent fever, and

for twenty-one days was in imminent danger. As she came slowly back to life, it was to find that even greater sorrows had yet to be faced. Writing to her at this time Father Varin said : ' Illness, suffering, contradictions, to be deserted and betrayed by creatures, even those we love best, to be forsaken by God, deprived of all sensible help, beset with obstacles on every side, all this belongs to and befits those who consecrate themselves to the Heart of Jesus, to establish His Kingdom on earth. "The servant is not greater than the Master." Our Lord passed through all these trials, and yet, when they were drawing to a close, He said to His disciples, " I have overcome the world." Let us place all our confidence and hope in Him. *His work cannot perish.*'

The last stages of the episode can be told quickly. Monsieur de Saint Estève's letters from Rome caused dismay and division in the Community at Amiens. By the laws laid down in his Constitutions, he said, the Office of Superior General was to be held for ten years only, therefore Mother Barat's deposition would take place in the following year. She heard, but made no move. Following the doctor's orders, at this critical moment she retired to the little Convent at Cuignières, ready to await what should be. Her departure was the signal for some decisive step to be taken. Mother Copina, the mistress of Novices, and Mother de Sambucy, the sister of Monsieur de Saint Estève, immediately left for his new house in Rome, where they were joined by Mother Baudemont, who had already left Amiens for Poitiers. One other wished to join them, but she was saved from this

fatal mistake. Mother Eugénie de Gramont remained. In later years her sorrow for her disloyalty was intense, and it needed all the Saint's love to bring her back to peace. 'Our Lord has brought you back to your Mother's heart,' she wrote, 'and who rests there more safely than you? I should never have loved you so much had it not been for the past. Let us then say *felix culpa* . . .' And again: 'God has been very merciful towards me since He has given me back my dear child whom others tried to steal away from me. Can I after that complain of the trials I have had to bear, trials which I so richly deserved.' These were the only reproofs Mother Eugénie ever heard. No wonder that she was wholly won, and bound by the bonds of love to the Society.

There were many people watching with interest and anxiety for the outcome of the struggle. Among these was a holy priest, Monsieur de Lamarche. Thirty years of trial and prayer had shown him that religion was to return to France through the Sacred Heart. During all that time he had been convinced that a Society called by its name was needed to effect this 'miracle.' When he first came to know the work of Father Varin and Mother Barat his interest was aroused, and he watched its growth from year to year, seeking for the signs of God's hand upon it. He was satisfied that he had found them, and at this moment, when all seemed lost, he wrote to Mother Barat: 'At the very time when the building is shaken to its foundations and seems about to fall, God will manifest His wisdom and goodness, that it may appear that *this is no work of man.* All will be forced to say "The finger of God is there."'

The Saint had need of this reassuring message, for it was followed almost immediately by a letter from Rome, which appeared to put an end to all hopes of a favourable issue to the contest. Monsieur de Saint Estève, exasperated by the patient strength of his opponents, and thinking to put an end to it for ever, went so far as to forge an answer to an appeal which had been made by Mother Barat to the Provincial of the Jesuits in Italy. How he had obtained her letter is not known. The document was dated August 5, 1815, and signed 'Stephanelli.' According to it, Rome had spoken, the Saint and her 'accomplices' were ordered to submit under pain of excommunication. Even Father Varin's faith faltered, and Monsieur Montaigne advised Saint Madeleine Sophie to return to Amiens and withdraw all opposition. She was ready to do so, but in her heart she could not believe that the work was to die. That the grain of wheat must die, she knew, but by a death that was life-giving, not one that destroyed all life.

There were friends at hand, however, who were not easily deceived; they had experience of Roman documents, and inquiries at Rome unmasked the fraud, and the whole intrigue fell to the ground. One sorrowful wound it had inflicted was never healed, for the house at Doorseele was not restored to the Order. Even there, however, joy sprang from the sorrow, for all those who were in it at the moment of its separation sought readmittance into the Society of the Sacred Heart.

Peace was re-established, and new life was given to the now tried work. But the Society had been born on the crest of a revolutionary wave, and it was

amidst storms of revolutionary crises that it was destined to pursue its way. Political disturbances were nearly everywhere to be so many declarations of war against the Institute. A congregation of women engaged in teaching children was to be declared again and again a danger to some great State—a fact which exemplifies the truth of the words : ' The children of this world are wiser in their generations than the children of light.'

Henceforth the Saint herself and those destined to succeed her were to carry on their work of planting and reaping throughout the world ' on a soil that was perpetually shaken, convulsed with violent upheavals or strewn with ruins.' [1] And thus they learnt to ' confess that they were pilgrims and strangers on earth . . . looking for a city that hath foundations . desiring a heavenly country.' It required no little courage and no little love to begin again and again from the beginning, having seen the work of years disappear in a few weeks or sometimes days.

When in 1830 the July revolution overthrew the government of Charles X, the Society numbered some thirty houses. Six had been founded in America, two in Italy, and twenty-two in France. At Quimper an old Capuchin convent had come into the possession of the Saint ; at Chambéry a convent of Saint Clare ; at Le Mans a Benedictine abbey ; at Autun a Visitation monastery ; and a Carmelite convent at Avignon. Paris had seen two houses, the Rue de Postes, which was soon too small, and had to be transferred to the Hôtel Biron. Besançon, Metz, Bordeaux, Lille, Lyons, and Perpignan completed the number.

[1] Baunard, vol. ii., p. 1.

The Revolution dispersed the school and the noviceship from the Rue de Varenne, and in its recoil destroyed the house at Perpignan. But there was no pause in the advance. Switzerland received those who were driven from Paris at Middes, and, later on, at Montet—a house which was itself to fall in the next revolutionary outbreak in 1848.

Before that date, however, the Society passed through a more fiery trial than that of many revolutions—a trial in which the strength of the waiting power of the Saint became once more apparent, as also the depth of her silent conviction that the work was God's, not hers.

Writing in February 1839 she said: 'Like the governments, the Society is on the verge of a crisis. I feel it. Pray to the Heart of Our Lord that we may surmount it and come forth from it purer and stronger.' At this date the number of houses had risen to forty-one, of which twenty-seven were in France and fourteen in other countries. This unexpected growth of the Order was the cause of the new difficulties. When the Constitutions had been framed after fourteen years of trial, in 1815, there were but six houses. Arrangements suitable for their general government were no longer sufficient for forty-one houses, scattered over Europe and America.

The details of the question need not be gone into, but while all were agreed as to the necessity of reforms which would make the work of the Superior General possible, there were some over-active-minded spirits in the Order who desired more considerable modifications.

Two currents of opinion were found among the

rulers of the Society ; the rank and file of the Order pursued their way untroubled by these differences. One would have brought the rule more closely into line with that of the Jesuits, by changing a number of details, and would have established the Mother House in Rome. The other rejected *every change* except the few absolutely necessary to make the government of the Order possible. The Saint rested her hopes of a peaceful solution of the difficulties upon the fact that all sought the good of the Society. 'It is easy to agree,' she wrote, 'when each one seeks God's interests and not her own. Personal pretentions spoil everything. If we cling to humility, all will be well.' While she would have accepted, even welcomed, the founding of the Mother House in Rome had she had but her own heart to consult, yet the other measures proposed seemed to promise no success at that time. 'I do not think,' she wrote, 'that women can be governed as men ; nor has the Society been established to prove that women can become as men, even though it may be less difficult in this century, where so many men become as women!' Many friends of the Society shared her fears. 'Take care what you do,' wrote Cardinal Odescalchi to Mother de Causans ; 'the better is often enemy of the good. The first inspiration of the Founder of an Order bears the mark of God's spirit. There is danger in attempting to tamper with it.' Father Roothan, General of the Jesuits, declared that the plans were unrealisable, and would lead to sorrowful results. Nevertheless, the partisans of reform had in their favour the Cardinal Protector and many other friends of great experience.

The Sixth General Congregation of the Order

met in Rome to consider the matter, and the views of the reformers were accepted by a majority of votes. Mother Galitzin, a Russian by birth and autocratic by disposition, was eager to enforce the changes at once in every house of the Order, but the Saint held her back. 'The work of God is not marked by impetuosity,' she said, 'nor are the statutes of a religious Order polished off as a Charter'; and she insisted on a three years' period of experiment.

They were years of sorrow to her, for the changes in her 'little Society' seemed likely to cause widespread trouble, not only in the Order, but even in the Church in France. A special bitterness attended this trial, for the opponents were her own most trusted auxiliaries. She herself was between them as the mother of all; bound by her motherhood to take no side, she was reproached by both, for what they deemed her 'weak love' for the other. Through all she strove to be loyal to her assistants, taking the burden of their actions . . . and yet true to her trust. She sought refuge in silence as in a stronghold; she knew no other weapon of defence. She again waited, prayed and hoped, bearing the brunt of every sorrow, ready for one thing always—to follow the Will of God.

Father Varin's protest was heard among the rest. The touchstone of the whole work was devotion to the Sacred Heart, and on this the rashly daring spirits of the new generation had laid their hands. In the opening pages of the Constitutions they had substituted the words 'to the greater glory of God,' the formula of Saint Ignatius, for 'to glorify the Sacred Heart of Jesus.' 'If you suppress this

article,' he wrote to the Saint, 'there is but one thing to do, and that is to change the name of the Society. . . . Even if you keep the name . . . it will not be that Society whose birth we witnessed thirty-nine years ago, which received you the first into its lowly cradle, and whose development you have brought about in so admirable a manner. The name may remain, but the reality, it is clear, will exist no longer.' And writing sometime later he said: 'What is happening to this dear Society of the Sacred Heart? I dare not ask myself this question, because I have not the courage to answer. What has become among us of that precious peace which Our Divine Master bought for us at so great a price? . . . For my own part I have but one thing to do: adore, submit, and pray.'

As at Amiens in earlier days, she found her strength in prayer. She dreaded one thing only, that the union and charity which, as she had 'been shown upon the mount,' was the one true bond of the Society should be broken. 'Light clouds, though raised with good intentions,' she wrote, 'have dimmed its lustre . . . but if all come [to the congregation summoned anew to arrange the difficulties] with minds unbiased, and willing to sacrifice anything and everything to the union and good of the Society, all clouds will disperse, and it will be easy to improve on the past and re-establish the uniformity so much desired.' And ending her letter to the Superiors convened to the meeting, she said: 'As I write out the list of the old familiar names, the very depths of my soul are filled with consolation and the sweetest hope; I can no longer doubt of the success of this meeting. . . .' Her hope

was realised, though the way to the desired goal had been the way of the Cross. How truly she had gauged the real goodwill and supernatural motives of those around her may be gathered from the fact that when the decrees of the Congregation of 1839 were, after the trial of three years, pronounced unsuitable, those who had been most eager to see them enforced submitted wholly to the reversal of their schemes, and their leader, Mother Galitzin, volunteered to go herself to America to undo the work she had done there three years previously, when enforcing the decrees. Her offer was accepted; there was never any distrust in the soul of the Saint. Reaching Louisiana towards the end of November, Mother Galitzin caught yellow fever and died a fortnight after her arrival. Her fault had been a fault of judgment, her heart was true.

When all was over and 'our beloved chariot back again on its four wheels,' as the Saint expressed it, Monsignor Affre, Archbishop of Paris, wrote of her: 'She is a true religious of the meek and humble Heart of Jesus; she did not open her mouth to defend or excuse herself.' He had been one of her bitterest opponents.

In the work of restoring peace she was guided by the words of the Archbishop of Besançon, Monsignor Mathieu, who had always understood and valued her, and also by the unerring instinct of her own heart. 'You will gain nothing by command,' he wrote, 'but all will come right by kindness, compliance and forbearance. So if there must be excess, let it be in leaning towards Our Lord's way of acting. He always meets us more than half-way in spite of our faults.' 'Bind yourself to your cross

only by the chains of love,' he wrote again, 'and let this holy cross itself be your prayer.' That the Society underwent this severe ordeal for four years without losing a single house or a religious was due, with God's grace, to the gentleness and patience of the Saint. 'I should never have thought,' she once wrote, 'that this virtue was so hard to acquire.' One who was privileged to be near her and to witness her suffering said she believed God had increased, in her case, the measure of anguish that the human heart could contain.

A fruit of these sufferings was seen too in the fact that during these years the number of foundations increased rapidly, so that when the trial had passed, the field of labour was wider and more fruitful than ever, and the labourers still more eager to serve the cause of God.

Between 1830 and 1848 thirty-seven new houses had been given into the care of the Saint. Three had been opened in the United States, one in Canada; while Belgium, England, Ireland, Poland, Austria, and Spain had received their first colonies. Sixteen more towns in France had welcomed the Institute, and nine houses had been opened in Italy. From five of these the religious were now driven out by a decree of the Piedmontese Chamber. Gioberti's hatred of the Society of Jesus had been extended to the Society of the Sacred Heart. Before getting rid of these dangerous enemies, as he described them (one hundred religious living peaceably in five convents), Gioberti first published the most infamous calumnies against them. To win over the support of good Catholics, he accused the nuns of condemning the action of Pius IX, and of offering prayers

for the conversion of the Pope! To the patriots they were represented as the supporters of Austrian influence, and were accused of subsidising foreign governments! To the rougher elements in the population they were described as aristocrats, hypocrites, enemies to all progress. The attacks chiefly centred on Mother du Rousier, Superior of the house at Turin; she was caricatured on the stage and in the streets.

'I was counting on taking refuge with you,' said the Saint, 'in case we were turned out of France, and here you are flying to us for shelter. All that God does is well done: we must submit.' In two short months the results of twenty years of labour had been swept away. The religious driven from one country went out to make foundations in others, and Mother du Rousier found a new and fertile field of labour in Chile.

'When the light leaves one country,' said Saint Madeleine Sophie, speaking to the novices at Conflans at this juncture, 'it goes to another. If we are banished from France, there is plenty of room in the Sacred Heart, and the whole world is ours. America, the Burmese Empire, and even China, are asking for us, and we shall go further afield to found new colonies.' This forecast was to find its fulfilment, but not in her day. The hundred religious now driven out of Italy set off to plant the banner of the Sacred Heart in other lands. And in the last period of the Saint's life, from 1848 to 1865, North America saw eighteen houses begin their arduous career. Three were opened in the British Isles, one in Holland, one in Germany, two in Italy, two in Austria, two in Spain, two in South America, while

the number of those in France was brought up to thirty-nine.

As she looked down the long vista of the years to that day in November 1800, when she had consecrated herself to a work of God's willing, and when, as she said 'I knew nothing, I foresaw nothing, I accepted all that was given me,' she realised the truth of her own words, spoken in answer to a petition for some measure that would have limited her sphere of influence: 'No, the Society is for all times and for the whole world.' The more a work is God's the more must this be true. There are no distinctions. To the Heart of the Good Shepherd all are welcome, and in It all are taught: the rich, who in the midst of their material abundance are often most miserably in want of a greater good, and need a charitable hand to help them; the poor, whom the joys of this world seem to pass by, and to whom even its necessaries are lacking; and the midway ranks, which in a way suffer more than any from want of understanding and sympathy. His Heart is the home for all.

The Saint knew more than ever that the work was God's, as she turned her eyes to that strange vision of the life that had been hers; so utterly undreamt of, so wholly unforeseen. Her awe and wonder were like that of mountain climbers, and of solitary venturesome wanderers in Arctic regions. 'I felt,' said one of these, 'the power of God around us.' Such, too, had been the experience of Saint Madeleine Sophie.

CHAPTER V

THE EDUCATOR-IDEALS

(Pages from an old School diary)

In the spiritual warfare of the world, the great struggle which is unceasingly being waged round the souls of men, there is one weapon used by all combatants. To build up or to destroy they rely upon education. It is then no mistaken policy, no mere accident, no 'regrettable' fact that the nineteenth century has seen a flood-tide of 'teaching orders' in the Church. For over two hundred years 'to educate the children' has been the ideal inspired by God to His friends. For that He stretches out His hands to beg an alms, for that He pleads for help. Through them He wills to respond with power to the urgent cry of the day.

Teaching is Our Lord's own vocation. 'He is the Teacher of them all,' said the prophet Osee, and His lesson is Himself.

In the pursuit of this vocation He spent His life, and He passed it on as His last commission to His Church. To follow in His footsteps, and train by His methods the creatures whom He alone really understands, and for an end He alone fully knows, is the sum total of her mission—a mission recognised in more than one General Council, and respected almost universally till towards the close of the seventeenth century.

Teaching we connect with children, and so did the One Master of the race. 'There is no endearing or tender name,' says Saint Clement of Alexandria, 'which God did not give to man in the Old Testament and repeat again to His Apostles in the New. My children, my little ones, my little children. And He likened man to lambs, to doves, to foals, to the little ones gathered by the hen under her wings.' All symbols of weakness and immaturity, all calling for pity, love, reverence, and service.

The beauty hidden in the name of child He explained to His Apostles when, in answer to their question as to dignity, He said: 'He who shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greatest.' The qualities which He loved in childhood, and for which He set it before men as a model, were among others, says Saint Clement in the same treatise, 'its facility for forgetting injuries, its humility, freedom from useless cares, and trust in the one Father . . . and He would teach us too, that life should be a perpetual spring, for the truth which is in us, as His children, knows no old age and renews us unceasingly.'

For these children He founded His school, the school of the noblest lessons. In the pictures, which after the manner of all teachers He puts before the children, human nature is seen in the beauty which was its own when it first came from the mind of God. There can be no true, no complete education for mankind outside this school of Christ.

Educationists are necessarily idealists. Those who refuse to cross the threshold of the spiritual realm, dream of states of perfect citizens, all fully

developed in mind and body. The rest seems out of reach. They produce learning, certain kinds of power, but their dream has never raised a people up, nor ever made them happy. No people are happy but those who have a home for their heart, and this in the school of the One Shepherd is given to all the children.

The Church to whom the mission to teach the nations was entrusted has alone dared 'call down the dreams of sunset into stone.' She has not feared to plan that all men should be like the God-man, and to that her scheme of education tends. This daring dream has been realised more often than we know, not only in the lives of Saints, the visible leaders and heroes of the race, but in the ranks there are always the unknown faithful thousands, whose happy secret is, 'I too have felt the wild-bird thrill of song behind the bars.'

When this fundamental training has been secured for the children, all the rest is added to it. The earth with its vast stored secrets was furnished and planned for the education and delight of man. The great divine blessing penetrates everywhere, and the most varied activities of men can find favour in the sight of God.

That the enemies of man's welfare realise the power of religion as the basis of education is seen in their eagerness to banish it from all schools. The importance of this spiritual training is recognised too in other circles more widely than the perusal of schemes of education would lead us to imagine. Pedagogues quarrel as to methods, but none die or are expected to die in their defence. The classical and modern sides, though claiming ardent supporters,

have had no martyrs. But within the last few years men have faced death, and died, for the right to teach religion to the children. At the bar of Soviet Russia they have defended that right, and claimed it as an essential duty. It was the voice of the Good Shepherd that spoke again, when in answer to the questions of the public prosecutor there came the untroubled reply : ' Yes, we shall continue to teach it.' The cry that was heard throughout the world on their condemnation to death was *not* one of surprise that men should be found to die for such a cause : to defend their right to teach the world to find the Way, to know the Truth, and to attain the Life.

The world of 1800 looked out on much the same struggle as the world of to-day : ' a race between education and catastrophe,' it has been called. To save the children and to keep them always children of the one Father was the aim of Saint Madeleine Sophie's life of labour. For this she flung a challenge to the world, and before she died many thousands had caught it up and followed in her train. For the children she would give and ask of others to give the ' greater love,' though it might be only in the slow death of unending toil. With the clear vision of the saints she looked through the storms and troubles of her times, beyond the battle and the smoke, to where the guiding light shone clear. Never in doubt as to the end, she could steer her craft through troubled waters.

The first article of her educational creed was that the nearer the teacher and trainer of youth approached the One Master, the more hope was there for the success of the work. She would have them

all sit at His feet. 'O God, give me saints,' she prayed in the early days of her venture, 'or let me die.' She thought it needed the mind of a saint to understand a child.

'Give of your superabundance to the children,' she wrote; 'fill your hearts with love of God, and then you will always be able to instil it into them. If we are united to God . . . we shall be able to do wonders for them.' And writing to another she said: 'You will do good if you live in union with Our Lord, for then you will act by His spirit and with Him. . . . I cannot exaggerate the effect produced upon children's souls by the spirit of prayer, and union with God.'

Next to the love of God in the soul of Saint Madeleine Sophie was the love of children. It would seem that in a special way her life was privileged to shadow forth the incident which Cardinal Wiseman calls 'the sweetest of our Redeemer's Life, when Christ taking a child set him in the midst of His disciples, and having embraced him, He said to them: "Whoever receiveth one such child as this in my name, receiveth Me." In this story,' says the Cardinal, 'we have the whole theory of Catholic education. Christ embraced that little child, His representative on earth.' Saint Madeleine Sophie embraced Him in them all. Children were, she said, her life, her rest, the dew of her soul. 'I would have founded the Society for the soul of one child,' she wrote, and shortly before her death, giving a backward glance over her long life, she said: 'To give the children to Our Lord and wrest them from hell, that it is which has kept up my life for eighty-five years.'

She loved the children and all that, like them, were little and simple, 'as Christ loved,' wrote Monsignor Baunard, 'with compassion and tenderness. She gave, as He gave with magnificence and unwearyingly, she gave the bread of the body, the bread of the heart, and the bread of the mind.'

It was no aloofness from the realities of life, no want of touch with the world of her day that made Saint Madeleine Sophie consider religion of paramount importance in education. She was no unpractical dreamer. She had seen with wide-open eyes what a world without religion meant, what followed when God was dethroned and reason, so called, ruled.

A second article of her creed was that women had a great mission in the modern world, and that their power of influence was incalculable. Writing to Mother de Rozeville in 1831, she said: 'How rare it is to find a valiant woman! It is perhaps necessarily so, since Scripture says that they are more precious than pearls and diamonds. . . . Let us however work to train a few. . . . For in this century we must no longer count on men to preserve the faith. The grain of faith that will be saved will hide itself among women. How different are God's thoughts to ours!' Writing to another she said: 'The world exerts all its power to gain women, to rob them of their faith and ruin them.' 'Between women and God,' she told the children of Mary at Lyons, 'is often arranged the eternal salvation of husbands and sons. But for this she must be the valiant woman. Strong to uphold purity of life; strong to keep inviolate the treasure of faith; strong in every battle of life; great-souled in face of calumny,

persecution and death . . . and remember,' she added,' sorrow is the training ground of strong souls.' ' A woman cannot remain neutral in the world,' she wrote ; ' she too is set for the fall and resurrection of many.' She was speaking in her own country, and there more than anywhere, perhaps, it has been seen how the last refuge of faith has indeed been in the hearts of women.

But woman's influence is not limited to the sphere of religion. ' You are Zouaves of another kind,' said Pius IX, speaking to the same Congregation ; and a celebrated Italian wrote : ' When an idea, whether political or religious, goes down from the mind of a man to the heart of a woman, and becomes a sentiment [that is a thought inspired by feeling] its power to resist all opposition and to triumph over every difficulty is increased a hundredfold ' ; and before him the author of ' Émile ' had written : ' Men will always be what women wish them to be.' To educate aright the heirs of such vast powers would be to educate the world. And all Saint Madaleine Sophie's system converged ' to give personal worth to each child, worth of character, strength of principles, anchorage in faith.' [1]

Rivers flow unaided to the ocean, but the souls of men will rarely go alone to good, it has been said, and this belief was in evidence in all schemes of education in former days. The shibboleth of self-determination for the schoolroom was unknown to our ancestors. And now it is looked on at times in a doubting spirit, even in the land which, perhaps, gave it birth. An American professor of great experience, discussing the value of the method, gave

[1] *Society of the Sacred Heart*, by Janet Stuart.

it as his opinion that the more freedom was left to individuals to shape their own course, the fewer were the ' individualities ' which emerged ; whereas, he said, when as more often in the old world, all are thrown into a common mould of education, there is more clearly marked individuality in the end. This may appear somewhat contradictory : the more liberty given to develop as you please, the more sameness in the pattern that results. It would suggest that there is still much to be said for older methods. Saint Madeleine Sophie believed in the need of discipline, direction, and definiteness in dealing with youth.

In drawing up her plans of study she was always guided by the experience of the recognised educational leaders of the day. Foremost among them, in 1800, were the Jesuits, who had laboured in this field for three centuries in the Universities and schools of Europe. The influence of Saint John Baptiste de la Salle is also clearly seen in the earlier schemes. He died in 1719, and of his work for the schools of his day it has been said : ' He kept only what was reasonable in that which had been done up to his time . . . he was guided by good sense.' The same can be said of the educators who began the great work afresh after the Revolution.

When the first house of the Society of the Sacred Heart was opened, under the sobriquet of the House of the Institute of Amiens,[1] the Fathers of the Faith (*i.e.* of the Sacred Heart) had already established a school for boys in the Oratoire, the house which

[1] The name of the Sacred Heart could not be borne openly at first, for it had been used as a rallying cry in the Vendean rising.

Saint Madeleine Sophie took a few years later. Among the masters in the boys' school was the famous Father Loriquet, who, it has been said, rendered more service than any other man to the cause of public education in France during the nineteenth century. He became later the director of the famous school of Saint Acheul, and was the author of all the best known text-books of the day. Between thirty and forty were either written or adapted by him for use in schools, in the course of fifteen years. They passed through innumerable editions, and were still found in the hands of the children many years after his death. His most marked success was in the inauguration of a scheme for the teaching of history, and, above all, of national history. It had found but little place in earlier programmes. This innovation was ridiculed by the University of Paris, but nevertheless imitated ; and the History of France, written by the Jesuit, was the text-book of University students ; a text-book unauthorised by the authorities, it is true, but so favourably viewed by the lecturers that a special ordinance was issued in 1832 urging rectors of colleges to exert their influence to get rid of it !

The services Father Loriquet rendered to the Society of the Sacred Heart were very varied In 1804 he drew up the first plan of studies for the school at Amiens. He was already well known in the house, and had taken the greatest interest in the work. No details had seemed unimportant to him. In 1803 the verses said or sung by the children for the Feast of the Superior, Saint Madeleine Sophie, were from his pen. The same year he rendered them a similar service when the Bishop of the diocese

visited the school. In the following year, on the Feast of Saint Joseph, Father Varin's patron, Father Loriquet again provided the discourse of welcome; while verses which for long preceded and closed the ceremony of prize-giving were also dictated by his muse.

At the request of the Saint and of Father Varin he now sketched out a scheme of studies. He was engaged on the same work for a boys' school in the neighbourhood of Amiens, and the next year he drew up a similar scheme for the College of Argentières, whither he had been transferred. In the preface to this third plan he said (and his remarks apply to the previous ones) : 'Experience teaches that in education, as in all other things, nothing is more dangerous than to allow ourselves to be dazzled by the appearance of some imaginary perfection. There is nothing . . . extraordinary in this plan . . . nothing that has not been proposed by the most celebrated men in the Republic of Letters, and carried out successfully by those who followed in their footsteps. . . . Among them Jouvency has been our special guide, in many places our plan is but the development of that which he traced in his great work, "Ratio discendi et docendi."' Father Loriquet wrote this when the violence of the revolutionary changes in every order were still fresh in all minds. His biographer, however, declares that this work entitles him to a place of equality among the great men he writes of, and that it is far from being a mere echo of their opinions.

To every plan of studies he made out, Father Loriquet added a list of books to be used in the classes. Among the first he proposed to Saint

Madeleine Sophie were Lhomond's French Grammar, revised and adapted by himself ; a summary of the 'Geography of the Different Ages' ; Elements of Arithmetic. The metric system, we are told, was then making its laborious conquest of the French people, and the books of Father Loriquet had later to be supplemented by charts drawn up by the Mistress of Studies, Mother de Charbonnel. Chronological Tables of Ancient and Modern History, Church Histories, and Sacred Histories were all from his pen. The last little book had an astonishing success. In 1845 we hear that some 30,000 copies were still being printed yearly. An apologetic note was added by the Father to the list of books he proposed to the Saint : 'The Ancient History and Roman History are not yet printed, and the History of France is, alas ! not yet begun.' It appeared only in 1814. The imperial censor had refused to allow it to be printed. The restoration of the Bourbons brought it to birth.

An interesting document has been preserved in the archives at Amiens, in which a detailed exposition of this first plan of studies, as it worked out in the classes, is given. It is a small book of some twenty-eight pages, printed by J. B. Caron l'aîné, the printer to the Bishop. On the title-page we read in very large characters : that in the House of the Institute of Amiens, Rue de l'Oratoire, No. 7, a solemn distribution of prizes is about to take place, preceded by examinations, the programme of which is to be found in the pages that follow. On a second title-page we are informed that these examinations will take place on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, the 19th, 20th, and 21st of September 1805, in the

mornings from 9 to 11, and in the evenings from 3 to 5. The distribution of prizes was fixed for four o'clock precisely; 'it will be preceded by a Dialogue of Madame de Maintenon, a Proverb of St. Cyr, and a Lyrical scene, with interludes of symphonies and choruses. The needlework, embroidery, specimens of caligraphy, geographical and chronological maps and drawings of the children will be on exhibition in the Examination hall.'

Whether the examinations were held in presence of the parents is not clear, but from a note appended to the book, it appears that it was all devised for their benefit. It runs as follows:

'*Nota.*—Some matters might have been cut out of this programme, for which the time has been too short to allow of their being taught to the children; but they have been left in to meet the wishes of the parents who have expressed the desire to see the detailed plan of Studies of this house. We have also had many enquiries as to the methods followed in this school to render even abstract subjects easy and agreeable to the children. We should have been glad to satisfy this desire had it been possible to make it the matter of a Programme. It may, however, be enough to state that we try to unite the useful with the agreeable . . . we aim at instructing while amusing our children: that is to say, we have adopted the method so much admired by Racine at St. Cyr. . . .'

On page 4 of the little book the list of the Masters attached to the Institute of Amiens is found—the earliest extant list of the many teachers who have given long years of service in the houses of the Order. The first heading is 'Writing, Monsieur Senépart,

fils '—a statement which contains in itself a whole volume of now forgotten history. He is followed by the Masters of Drawing, Singing, Accompaniment, and Harp. A lady, Madame Bulan, taught the piano.

But the chief interest is in Monsieur Senépart, fils. He stands there as the upholder of an ancient tradition, as the representative of the once proud position of the vanished guild of ' Master Writers.'

In the days of Saint Jean Baptiste de la Salle (1651–1719) no schoolmaster in France dared teach writing. It was the monopoly of a corporation, the *Maîtres Écrivains*. Originally copyists attached, before the days of printing, to the University of Paris, they had turned their attention to teaching writing, when their means of livelihood was lost. Their pretentions became unbounded. Innumerable lawsuits with the Universities and schools always ended in confirming their claims, and even the picture of a pen was prohibited on the sign-board of a schoolmaster. The Association vanished with all else in the Revolution, but so firm was the hold of tradition that no school in 1800 would have ventured to suppose that its own staff was capable of teaching writing. It was an art which meant far more than it does in English-speaking countries, and included the teaching of innumerable beautiful scripts.

There is much to be learnt from the programme, which is unfortunately too long to be reproduced in its entirety. The children, whose names are given, as well as the towns from which they came, were divided into four regular classes. In these they studied, in carefully graded courses, Sacred History,

Church History, French Grammar and Language, Arithmetic, up to partnerships, discount, mixtures! Practical Geometry, Book-keeping, Mythology, and Literature. While a predominant place was given to the study of French literature, the influence of old ideals is clearly seen. Under each heading of the scheme on which the children were examined the 'classics' are given the first place, and evidently used as the norm with which the works of all other languages are compared. For the great writers of Italy, Spain, and even England with Shakespeare and Milton, appear on these pages. Many prose passages and poems were learnt by heart.

Besides these 'classes' there were three specialised courses: one for History, one for Geography, and one for Domestic Economy.

The History course, as has been said, was the 'creation' of Father Loriquet. It was perhaps the strongest point in the curriculum, and has always been followed in the schools of the Society of the Sacred Heart. It aimed at giving the children a wide general view of Universal History, instead of a specialised study of one or two disconnected periods, which are apt to be left for ever floating in the mental atmosphere, becoming more and more nebulous as time goes on, having little point of contact with reality. Whereas the other method gives to the children the 'freedom' of many cities, and makes them in a true sense at home in all the world. The biographical element was strong throughout the course, and great prominence was given to the correlation of History and Geography.

This last, as a separate subject, was studied in two classes. The matter was divided into (1) Astro-

nomical Geography, and (2) Physical and Political Geography.

Four closely printed pages explain what was included under the first heading. The term which appears in all books treating of the schoolrooms of those days, ' the use of the globes,' comes vividly to life. The evident importance attached to astronomical geography, and the variety and interest of the problems set for the children, may owe something to the fact that one of the members of the Community at that time was Mademoiselle Cassini, who came, says a French ' Who's Who,' of a family of astronomers and topographers, four generations of which had rendered great services to their country. These problems to be solved by means of the terrestial and celestial globes were at least more interesting and more in touch with the realities of daily life than many of the modern puzzles which adorn our arithmetic books, and are likewise devised to train thought and ingenuity.

The course of physical and political geography suggests that much use was made of maps.

Named Superior in 1802, and Superior General in 1803, Saint Madeleine Sophie at first held a special meeting of the mistresses every six months, in which the methods and arrangements already adopted were submitted to close examination, and changed or replaced by better ones. There are still extant the minutes, written in her own hand, with many corrections and erasures, of the meetings held in 1804, 1805 (?), and 1808.

The General Congregation of the Order in 1815 was too fully occupied with the difficulties which had been created by Monsieur de Saint Estève to be

able to give much attention to the schools, though the outline of a plan of Studies is indicated in the Constitutions then accepted.

The very varied influences which were brought to bear on these first plans and their revisions up to 1820 is seen in the names of the members of the Order who helped the Foundress in this work. There were present at one or all of these earlier Councils Mother de Charbonnel, who had been educated by the Ursulines of Monistrol; Mother de Marbeuf, who had been trained in Benedictine schools; Mother de Terrail, a child of Madame de Maintenon's famous establishment at St. Cyr; Mother Duchesne, who represented the Visitation tradition of education; and Mothers de Lalanne, Chobelet du Bois-Boucher, Bigeu, Grosier, and Girard, all of whom had had experience in teaching. Thus the Saint drew from the old tradition in the Church, while keeping in touch with the living present. For in the Congregation of 1820, which was specially concerned with the question of the schools, the Abbé Frayssinous gave the help of his great experience to Fathers Varin and Loriquet. Two years later he became Minister of Public Instruction.

This General Congregation of 1820 laid down as a guiding principle that the children should be taught all that was necessary to fit them to do their work in the world. And this work was to be considered chiefly as that of wife and mother.

'The study of one's own language is the very heart of a modern education,'[1] wrote Mother Stuart in 1911, and this view, which is now being very

[1] *The Education of Catholic Girls*, by Janet Stuart, ch. viii, p. 127.

widely recognised as the best, and is being advocated by all who have the interests of the children at heart, was that of Saint Madeleine Sophie and her advisers over one hundred years ago. Great stress was laid on language teaching in 1820, and this was still more the case in 1833. To know the grammar of their own language perfectly, to be able to write correctly on any subject on which their knowledge was sufficient, to read, if possible, beautifully, at least agreeably, were, it appears, the minimum expected by the Saint from all the children. These things she held to be the fundamental basis of all learning, the tests of a good education. Language lessons and lessons in reading were given daily throughout the classes in methods adapted to the varying ages of the children.

When they could read their own language fluently, Latin reading was to be begun. The text-book chosen was, as in the childhood of the Saint herself, the Book of Psalms. It was supposed that this point might be reached in the course of the second year. That Latin appeared thus second on the list was the 'great innovation' made in the *petites écoles* and free schools by Saint John Baptiste de la Salle. Before his day, France was, we are told, 'covered with these little schools,' but in every one of them the children were obliged to learn to read Latin before French. If there was time, in their short two years of schooling, they might also learn to read their native tongue. The reason was obvious; only those children were thought of who would pass on from these primary schools to the colleges, the *pays de Latin*, from which the mother tongue was banned.

In the introduction to his French Grammar, Father Loriquet set down as a guiding principle for the teachers: 'Few rules, much practice.' This word of Quintilian, he wrote, is especially applicable to language teaching, where long lists of rules, exceptions, observations, and remarks throw the minds of children into hopeless confusion.'

Composition also held an honoured place, and in the revision of the plan made in 1833 several methods were suggested for training the children to write well. For the correction of this written work it was laid down that attention should not be wholly riveted on spelling and penmanship. . . . A page, it is said, should be corrected carefully from this point of view, and attention then given to the essentials of composition.

Memory was carefully cultivated, but not to excess. 'It is still more important,' we read in the plan, 'to cultivate the power of thought. . . . Everything the children learn must be explained to them, and they must be brought to understand it as far as possible at their age. . . .' But 'the wealth or the poverty of our intellectual life depends chiefly on our memory,' wrote Mother Stuart, and French teaching then as now seems generally to have recognised this fact. School text-books in consequence were drawn up on the supposition that the children must necessarily learn much 'by heart.'

By 1833 geography was taught in every class, and it is suggested that a good text-book should be arranged in the form of travels, interspersed with letters written from various countries. Realistic methods were advocated for bringing home the meaning of geographical terms to the minds of the children.

Many other revisions followed this one of 1833, which had been made with special care, in consequence of the reforms introduced into the school systems in France by Guizot's ministry. Each movement in the educational world found the Saint awake and watchful. All her revisions and changes were made with the same leading idea to do the best for the children, and to use the experience gained by her own teachers and those of the world.

Saint Madeleine Sophie always recognised that a living system of education must be adaptable to place and time, so while holding firmly to the great underlying principles of true education, she examined with fearless eyes the claims of the moving world. In 1832 she wrote to Mother de Rozeville: 'It shows weakness of mind to hold too much to the beaten track, through *fear* of innovations. When it is a question of souls, what does the pen or pencil, the ruler or the paper matter to God?' And writing to the Superiors of the Order from Paris on August 5, 1863, she said: 'We cannot hide from ourselves that time brings many changes and necessitates modifications which must be examined and weighed with care. The rules and Constitutions must remain intact, but we *can* and even *must* narrow or widen their application. If we hold strictly to the letter, we shall put obstacles to the progress of the Society, and hinder the good which it can do. . . .'[1] And again the next year she came back upon the same point: 'Education is not as it was in former days. Many institutions have yielded to the tendencies of the times. God forbid we should ever wish to make any compromise in

[1] *Circular Letters*, Part II, No. 68.

regard to those duties and sacrifices which are our chief aim ; but it is necessary to examine again those points which can be conceded, to review the plan of studies that we may complete and modify it.'

There were some who did not share her brave spirit and lacked her width of vision. How wide it was, and had to be, is seen from the fact that each year brought new houses under her sway, houses in foreign and far-off lands. She had to listen to the cry of the children not only from France, but from all parts of the world, and do her best to meet their widely differing needs. Writing to Mother Duchesne in America, she said : ' Times change, and to keep up with them we must change and modify our methods. . . .' And again to Mother Merilhou in 1843, speaking of her work in England, where the first foundation had just been made, she said : ' You must make a study of the ways of the country and adopt them as your own.' And of the same foundation she wrote : '. . . The care of the children must extend to the smallest details. . . . All means of education, both moral and physical, must be carried to a point of great perfection. There will be no success in England unless you unite all these means.' ' England interests me deeply, and I have decided upon making all possible sacrifices for the foundation,' she wrote to Mother d'Avenas.

Her work was thus in one way more extended and more complicated than that of a Board of Education in any single country. And it differed too from theirs in that there was a complete absence of officialdom. ' The heart is the mainspring of woman's government,' wrote Mother Stuart, and it

was so, very specially, in the case of Saint Madeleine Sophie.

This need of keeping in touch with the educational questions of the day, always imperative for those who would train youth, was, she said, ' one of the chief reasons why the General Congregations of the Order had to meet every six years.' And at these meetings, as indeed at all times, she was the centre, the ' chief moderatrix,' as the Latin ceremonial styled her office, ' a keeper of the balance, a restorer of the balance when it was disturbed.' [1]

The last complete revision made in her lifetime was that of 1852. In its opening paragraph she wrote : ' In drawing up this plan experience has been our guide, and without despising old methods, or rejecting new ones, we have taken from each what has seemed to be most favourable to the development of the mind.' The same principle guided her followers in the revisions since her day. They have been many, for ' a plan of studies is a book which can never receive a final form,' wrote one of the Generals of the Christian Brothers. ' New experiments, new methods, new laws, new needs, make revision perennially imperative.'

But to all changes that have come about in these matters, following the ever-moving present, her assent has been given, as it were, beforehand. ' Not what she did in her time, but what she would do if she were here to-day ' has been the guide ; and what that means none who study her life and letters can doubt. ' Her foundations remain and our day builds on them according to the needs of time and place.' This has been in substance the

[1] J. Stuart.

guiding thought in the latest revision of the plan of studies made in 1922.

Questions of the schools, of the children, and the training of the mistresses come up again and again in the letters of the Saint. No details escaped her, and she never wearied in her effort to help. 'Children's minds need the marvellous,' she wrote to one, 'let us give it to them in all the wonders that their faith reveals.' 'No politics! I absolutely forbid our mistresses to speak to the children of different political opinions [of the day]. That is the best course. In the Convent they are all on the same footing,' she wrote to Mother de Gramont in 1832, when the bitterness between the Legitimists and Orleanists was at its height.

Her whole life was service, and a hard service. 'Administration, by its very nature, means dealing with difficulties.'[1] And difficulties are the daily bread of those who would, like Saint Madeleine Sophie, save the children. For them she sacrificed everything, even her longing to be alone with God. In old age she yet stood bravely in the breach, watching every movement of the armies, content to serve to the end.

[1] J. Stuart.

CHAPTER VI

CHARACTERISTICS

'Men passible like unto us.'

THE END

1865

SAINT MADELEINE SOPHIE had been little more than a child in years when the Society of the Sacred Heart was given into her keeping, and she was bidden, 'Fear not, for I am with thee, . . . I will bring my daughters from the ends of the earth. . . . The least shall become a thousand, and a little one a most strong nation.'

They had grown, as it were, together. Her life and its life were as one. Her soul grew in sanctity as the Order grew in the world; as its troubles and trials multiplied, so did her strength and courage to bear them; as the questions which confronted it became more complex, so did her intuitive understanding of their solution develop. She became identified with even the smallest details of its vast organisation by reason of the length of time that God left her at the helm. For sixty-two years her Shepherd's lantern was the light of the flock; she was the 'stroke' of the oarsmen, the cross-bearer in the ever-growing procession, the strong support on which all rested, the centre to which all came home.

She never grew old, for the qualities of her soul

were those of a child. In mind and heart she was in kinship with all that was beginning, whether the beginning was to life on earth or to one of the many stages of the soul's life on its uphill way to eternity. Living as she did, chiefly in this enduring life of the soul, she had about her the youth of immortality. To the end she was ready for any enterprise that promised to further the kingdom of God upon earth.

We have seen how as a child she had set out penniless and almost alone to conquer the world of souls for God. Years passed and still the brave heart struggled on, in the midst of difficulties, and dangers, and sorrows, and weariness enough to daunt the strongest spirit. Her courage sprang from her love and from the depth of her realisation of her relationship to God as an instrument. This was the burden of her teaching to all who shared her labours. 'We can do nothing of ourselves,' she wrote, 'the Creator alone can work in souls. The less we put of ourselves, the more Our Lord works. That is why He generally chooses those who are of little worth, mere nothings, as His most precious instruments. All will go according to the mind of the Master, as soon as you keep yourself in your place and only act under His divine impulse. . . .'

Miseries and imperfections were of no moment. 'I thank God for the light He gave you to see your miseries without being made sad or losing confidence in His goodness. . . . The instrument acts more or less well in proportion as it is one with the hand that uses it. Let Our Lord act, then forget yourself continually that His work may prosper . . . that is, give yourself over to His Spirit and keep your peace even in the midst of many imperfections.'

Imperfect instruments work wonders in the hands of an artist. God, it would seem, can scarcely work His work on earth with others. But He needs two things in those He chooses: good sense to know they are incompetent, and courageous submissiveness which undertakes work all the same. The *competent* must go their little way, and so would spoil it all. They cannot, as a rule, be merely instruments. They work upon another plane where failure leads to limited misfortune and not to eternal loss. But on the borderland of life, where two worlds meet, another standard regulates selection. Once chosen for the service of our neighbours' souls 'we shall never again find rest on earth,' wrote Saint Madeleine Sophie; 'it is the "I die daily"; accept the situation with generosity, and let us live as if *we* lived no more.'

This conviction of her dependence, united with her love, made her invincible. 'She wished and even hoped to succeed in setting the whole world on fire with the love of God,' wrote Mother Cahier. The word 'impossible' had no place in her vocabulary.

She had all the adventurous courage of the knights of old. Not only the daring courage of youth to 'spur to a land of no-name outracing the storm-wind,' but also the long courage to carry through and endure to the end; the double courage of which a poet wrote:

> 'Love makes its vows in days of joy,
> Love keeps its vows in nights of sorrow.'

She was one of those knights of God to whom it was given to win a great following in the world. Before she died her legions had gathered in many lands, but the greater grew their number the more she was ever

at their feet 'as one that serveth.' On the back of a little picture, found among her papers after death, was written in her own hand : ' Bear suffering from all, but give no cause of suffering to any one.' It was the way she had understood the privileges of her office.

By nature simple and direct, she was without the smallest trace of unreality, and easy of access to all. This often caused astonishment among people who imagined that long years of Superiority must necessarily overshadow simplicity. She never, as it has been said, got accustomed to being a Superior to the extent of ' accepting services, forgetting how to render them.' ' The life of a Superior,' she wrote, ' ought to be one of continual self-sacrifice. This will become sweet to them through humility and the inner life of the soul.' One service that she constantly rendered to all who met her was that of being a gracious and patient listener ; an accomplishment which at the price of much patience brings happiness to others and wins many friends. A celebrated Italian surgeon, Riberi, called on her one day, and spent some hours describing the marvellous cures he had effected. Much work was waiting for her, and those about the Saint expressed regret that she had allowed him to take so much precious time, and wondered why she had not brought a mere visit of ceremony more quickly to an end. ' How could I ? ' she answered. ' I saw that by merely listening to him, I made him happy. How could I refuse to give him that little pleasure ? '

One of the crosses of her life was, however, the necessity imposed on her by her position of appearing so frequently in public Her inclination always led

her into the shadow and to silence. When she was forced to show herself, it was as still shadowed by God's presence.

'When I think of your solitude,' she wrote to one of her nuns, 'I am obliged to turn away quickly from the picture it calls up, so great is my longing to leave all and bury myself in it. I have such a need of solitude. I am so weary of the works of men and of all that follows from them, that I should like to hide myself for ever. . . . You know how little I can hope for such a joy. This is my cross, I am indeed chained to it, else I should, long since, have fled from it.' The only comfort she drew from this cross was that it enabled her in reality to be the servant of all. Writing to Mother Thérèse Maillucheau she said: 'I cannot forget that the happiest hours of my life are those we spent together. But how long ago that seems! Thabor then was joined to Calvary, now all our paths are on the latter mountain. . . . What suffering these poor hearts of ours have to go through until they rest in God alone. . . . But what is He this God for whom my soul seeks, yet whom I cannot reach, this God for whom I was made? . . . My God is a hidden God. There we must stop; we will talk of our Hidden God when we meet. . . . Do you remember our longing for a life of solitude, far from the world? It was a happy dream, but it had to be sacrificed. Doubtless it was not God's Will. It still costs me a pang to give it up, perhaps for ever.' And writing to Mother Duchesne she said: 'How often do my thoughts carry me back to the happy days we spent together on that peaceful mountain [Ste Marie d'en Haut, Grenoble]. We were seldom interrupted by visitors,

and my refusal to see some of the few people who came was the only cloud that rose between us. . . .'

There was a very personal note in Saint Madeleine Sophie's love for God. 'She had an ideal,' said Père Eymien, speaking at Besançon in 1900, 'the most magnificent of all: Jesus Christ; and she loved Him with a vehement and great-souled love.' When she gave herself to God, she had turned to Him with all the ways and thoughts of love. That He loved anything made it lovable in her eyes. That He wanted anything made her strive to the uttermost to give it to Him. This was the secret of her zeal for souls, and led her to become for them, as the Good Shepherd, pursuing them with unwearying hope and love in the rough ways they chose to go.

One episode stands out in the life of Saint Madeleine Sophie, in which this faithful pursuit of a soul is seen in all its pathos. For twenty-three years she clung with persistent love to one whom God's providence had brought across her path. A lost sheep, who but for the Saint could never have found the fold. Where Julia came from, no one ever knew, she never told her own story twice in the same way; but she was alone and poor and of a difficult and wayward disposition, 'like nothing in ordinary life,' it was said, 'deceitful, treacherous, mean, passionate to the verge of frenzy'; but the Saint saw only a soul, found in dangerous places by the Good Shepherd, and put into her care by Him. She adopted her as her own child, wrote more than two hundred letters to her, and suffered much on her account. For to many her love for this girl was inexplicable; like the elder brother in the parable,

they were scandalised at the strange way the unseemly prodigal was welcomed. One person after another failed in their efforts to educate her, all were repayed by calumny and ingratitude, but still the Saint held on. She excused her faults, pleaded for her forgiveness, trained her little talents, found work for her, and, above all, forgave her again and again, and ever hoped. So disgraceful did the girl's conduct at length become that for a time the Saint feigned to cast her off, but as she said to those who, perhaps, thought secretly she had at last done well, 'it is only as God does when a soul persists in rejecting Him. He is obliged to withdraw, but all the time He pities it, goes on doing it good, and hoping for its return.' And Julia returned to her mother, not once but many times, to be always welcomed with the same love and hope. One of the last letters written by the Saint, a few days before her death, was to this unhappy child. 'I wish to see you once more in this world, but it will perhaps be for the last time, for I am near my end. I can even feel my life ebbing away. . . . You have assured me that you are changed, but watch over yourself. . . . A look towards heaven, which you are in danger of losing, and the remembrance of your mother, will stop you, my dear child, at the brink of the abyss.' Julia died seven years after the Saint and in peace with God.

'Imagination is inclined to see the canonised saints as a row of solemn figures standing in dull monotony and worshipful gesture, like virgins and confessors in an early mosaic. Yet, as a matter of fact, people who have been canonised were to their contemporaries the most striking personalities

among men and women striving for righteousness. They were all undoubtedly very good ; but goodness, despite a curious prejudice to the contrary, admits of more variety in type than wickedness, and produces more interesting characters.' So writes a non-Catholic commentator on the life of Saint Catherine of Siena. And in his preface to the life of Saint Madeleine Sophie, Monsignor Baunard develops further one aspect of this truth. Not only were the saints the great personalities of their times, but in that time they were passible like ourselves. 'The souls of saints,' he says, 'are not that Dead Sea which no breath of wind ever ruffles, and where no life moves beneath the heavy weight of waters ; they are rather that Sea of Gennesareth which had at times disturbances and storms, but where Christ is the Master, and which grows calm beneath the hand of Him whom wind and seas obey.'

We realise this must be so, and yet can hardly venture to believe that saints were as other men ; that to themselves they seemed dusty, travel-stained and weary, remote indeed from the aureoled beings with which their own imaginations peopled heaven.

That their lives were passed in the little round of daily duties, daily worries that make up the greater part of all men's lives, seems almost a profanation to suppose, and this in spite of the simplicity and sense of homeliness in the Gospel story.

Nowhere is this encouraging truth more clearly seen, perhaps, than in the life and letters of Saint Madeleine Sophie. Of her intimate intercourse with God she tells us, of set purpose, almost nothing ; it is seen by its fruits. And the way of her spiritual life has been revealed to a great extent in her many

letters. Some 14,000 of these are still extant, not notes, or scrappy answers written in haste, but long letters, for the most part covering several pages.

Imagination fails and courage almost faints before the sum total of labour they represent ; they were only one item of her busy life. They make a fascinating record. In them we find a complete chronicle of the Society, seen from a point of view, of all the most interesting, her own ; echoes of her spiritual life and that of very many of her daughters ; and a long chapter in the history of schools. All who received her letters treasured them. The earliest are to Mother Duchesne, dating from 1804. Till 1808 few others shared the correspondence, except Mother Emilie Giraud. In that year, however, the Saint left Poitiers and began her long and faithful intercourse with those who had been her novices. Mother Thérèse Maillucheau, her soul's friend above all others, Mothers du Chastaignier, Balastron, Michel, and Geoffroy appear upon the scene. They are followed, year by year, by many more, until the number has grown to a multitude, for the first names only disappear when death has claimed them.

Saint Madeleine Sophie stands revealed in these letters as she was when she traversed the dusty roads of life bearing her great burden.

She comes before us with her great heart, wide fearless outlook, clear judgment and gentle humour. She appears utterly straight, true, simple and natural. 'No, my child,' she wrote to Mother Aloysia Jouve, 'there was neither *finesse*, nor any planning in the promise I gave you. . . . This *finesse* has often been attributed to me ! ! I have such a horror of

it that I cannot even bear the thought of it. So do not *you* have any such thought about me.'

In these letters we find the Saint struggling with the details of the immense and complex organisation that had grown up in her hands. In fifty years she founded one hundred and five houses. They all began in the greatest poverty, having nothing but the bare walls, as she wrote more than once. 'We have at last taken possession of the Château of La Ferrandière, but our nuns there are like the Holy Family in Bethlehem. What strength there is in Mother de Charbonnel! She always has too much! It is a good thing to send her on foundations.'

And writing in January 1819 to Mother Maillucheau she said: 'Our mothers have set off for Lyons. . . . Mother de Charbonnel would take nothing with her, seeing as she did, how poor we are in linen, books, vestments, etc. She will, I am sure, never ask you for anything, but she will gratefully accept whatever you like to send her. I only just tell you this, for I know that you, like us, have stripped yourself of everything that you could give. . . . They are content to suffer poverty, and . . . it is certain that they will have none of the help we had at Chambéry. . . . At Lyons they will only have the bare walls. No books—I had already given away all our duplicates: . . . Pray for me, dear mother, and if *you* are on the cross, think that your old friend is not resting in any way on Thabor!'

As time went on these difficulties were lessened as the houses already established came to the aid of those beginning. But all, to the end, sent their cry of distress to the Saint herself.

Mother Duchesne had left Paris on February 8,

1818, to lead out the first colony to America. For long it seemed too great a venture to Saint Madeleine Sophie. But God's will appeared to point to it, the mission was approved by the Holy See, and she yielded. To yield was one of the things in which the greatness of her strength was often seen. She did it so completely and simply that it won her a truer submission than would have many commands.

'I never could think of [this separation] without having my heart torn, but the reality surpassed all my prevision of sorrow.' To cross the Atlantic in a sailing vessel,' the *Rebecca*, took sixty-six days, and news of Mother Duchesne's safe arrival only reached Paris six months later. Writing in April 1919 to Mother Maillucheau, she said: 'I have had a letter from our dear Philippine; they are in the greatest want, and that is not the least of my anxieties. Monsignor Dubourg [the Bishop of New Orleans] writes also, and he asks for money and more subjects. We have neither the one nor the other to send.' A few days later she wrote to Mother Duchesne: 'The Society, though very poor at this moment, has united all its little efforts to collect some presents for you. Beauvais and Paris are sending a piano; Sister de Marbeuf [a novice] has got the seeds and the candelabra. Mesdemoiselles de Cassini and de Saint Marc are sending you all that is wanted to teach drawing: models, paint-boxes, crayons, etc. Grenoble will send you silk and flowers. Poitiers, paper. Amiens, 100 francs. All ask your prayers. How anxious I am as to your position, dear Philippine. I wish I could get news of you every month! For I fear you will be worn out with work and privations.' And writing to Mother

Maillucheau, she begs her to send all that has been collected for Mother Duchesne to Bordeaux at once, in time for the departure of the *Rebecca* ' which has undertaken to see to the whole consignment. It will be most tiresome if the packages arrive too late.'

While providing, as she could, for the material wants of the mission, her thoughts turned at the same time to the many difficulties her daughters would meet with in this new land. She tried to reassure them, writing to Mother Audé : ' Do not be troubled, my child, when for a greater good, and often by absolute necessity, you will find yourself obliged, in the beginnings to suppress some points of our rules. Even in France, we have to sacrifice some in the first days of foundations. The essential thing is to tend to uniformity in the measure that Divine Providence makes it possible for you.'

For every single foundation she prepared the way, sent directions, smoothed down difficulties as they arose, watched over the interests of the Society, encouraged the foundresses individually, and rejoiced and suffered with them all.

There is a complete absence of sameness in her letters, she meets the people on their own ground, and with varying degrees of intimacy and affection. In some, even many, there is the *abandon* and openness of the purest and truest friendship. No misunderstandings, she knew, could arise between her and Mother Maillucheau, and she never hesitates to tell her all her thoughts ; Mother Maillucheau, while at home in the things of the spirit, was generally at sea in the material world. Her generosity knew no bounds, even the Saint at times thought it excessive. ' I received this present,' she wrote to her, ' with

gratitude, and since it came from you it is more precious. But you give on all sides, and I am afraid that we profit at your expense. Tell me that this is not so and I shall be at rest.' And on the occasion of a foundation : ' I received your letters, dear mother, and I saw in them that love which you have always shown to the Society. You offer *six* people ! ! But how will *you* get on ? We shall not take an unfair advantage of your goodwill, and will only accept what is absolutely necessary.'

' Do not be angry with me,' she says later, ' if, when writing, I use titles of respect ! [Mother Maillucheau was Superior at Grenoble.] My heart employs the one you love, and *that* I will keep for you all my life ; but, as you say, I do not dare use it out of respect for your dignity. However, if you wish it, I shall set the proprieties aside, and follow my feelings.'

Writing to others, the Saint appears as guide, friend, mother, and Superior. She reproves freely, and even strongly, vehemently, if there has been, to her mind, any want of devotion to the work of the schools, or the ingratitude of a half-hearted service of God. But there is always the note of hope and love. To one who caused her much sorrow she wrote : ' How could you, my dear child, with your sensitive and loving heart, have caused so much grief to Our Lord first of all, and then to your mothers who love you so much and have surrounded you with care and affection ? . . . How I thank the Divine Heart for having touched you, and how I thank you for having been faithful to His voice. . . . I no longer have any doubt as to your fidelity.' She did not fear faults, but as she said one day :

'It is no little work to be able to hold all these imaginations in check.' 'You want to be forgiven,' she wrote to one, 'how can I refuse; you know that one of my joys in this world is to forgive, above all when I see that people draw spiritual profit from their faults. More self-distrust and more humility is what our Lord asks for when we have let ourselves go. Now we shall say no more about it.'

Writing in 1808 to one who had been among the first novices at Grenoble, she said: 'You promise me that you will become more grave and serious! Yes, work for that, but without constraint or sadness; be always very gay at recreation, only do not talk the *whole* time, leave a little room for others. . . .' And ending the long letter she says: 'I cannot close this without thanking you for all the trouble you took to help me [she had been ill at Grenoble while on a visit there]. You gave me everything with such goodwill that I became accustomed to it! and now when anything is missing, I find myself saying: "My sisters at Grenoble will give it to me."'

To Mother du Chastaignier, who had been with her in the loved noviceship at Poitiers, she said: 'You have guessed rightly that nothing could please me better than your complete conversion, without that, all proofs of affection and gratitude, whether expressed in verse or in prose, will not even reach the border-land of my heart! As Father Louis [Barat] has scolded you for having made a premature sacrifice, I shall add nothing. He made you understand how imprudent you had been. You must realise that if a poor little farmer takes the best fruit he can find to present to his master, the present

is hardly acceptable if the fruit is in reality still quite green.'

And writing to Mother Emilie Giraud, on a blank sheet at the end of another's letter, she said: 'I have not the courage, my dear Emilie, to leave this bit of paper blank. I must have a little talk with you. I cannot tell you what pleasure your letter gave me. . . . Be very simple and *very little.* How lovable you will be when you have stripped yourself wholly of self, and live only in and for Our Lord. . . . You say my brother gave you some good advice, be faithful to follow it.'

Father Barat rendered many services to the Order. Under the influence of Father Varin his youthful severity had been softened, and he was gladly welcomed in all the convents. But though the Saint accepted his authority on spiritual matters, she would not allow him to trespass in other preserves. 'I am not at all surprised,' she writes to Mother Emilie, 'to hear that my brother prefers long prayers to the embroidery at which you are working! and that he grudges the time you spend on it! He who in old days tore up all that I did, and told me it was waste of time! But you know, dear child, how useful it is among us, so I wish you to take advantage of being with those who can teach you. Learn specially how to shade well. Take only what time you can spare. Of course prayer passes first, and also the study of grammar and other necessary sciences.'

Mother Emilie was always very dear to the Saint, she was still a child when she joined the Society in company with Mother Duchesne at Grenoble, and she had had everything to learn. Grammar was

for long a sore subject with her. 'How are your studies getting on?' wrote Saint Madeleine Sophie from Poitiers in 1907. 'I do not see that you have made much progress: a cat would write as well as you; and an Algonquin, after a few lessons, would make a better hand at spelling! In the composition which your mother sent me, I saw a great many faults. I could not believe my eyes. I shall have to give up the idea of having you to help me and to be my companion.'

'In the midst of all this worry,' she wrote to her later on, when she was at work in the school at Niort, 'keep your soul in peace, that is, in the love of Our Lord, who never loses sight of you for a moment, but only just puts Himself behind the fence that He may see if you will be faithful. . . . Too much work is a danger for an imperfect soul . . . but for one who loves Our Lord . . . it is an abundant harvest. . . . Unchanging gentleness towards everyone, patience to bear the worries that spring up on all sides, and confidence in God which will not allow a single doubt to arise as to His protection in all the events we fear, these, my child, are the fruits of fidelity to the Holy Spirit, who teaches us unceasingly in the depths of our hearts, if we will only listen to Him.' This was a page written from her own book. 'The cross has also visited us here at Grenoble,' she adds; 'there are several children ill, eight in the infirmary, I think.'

When Mother Emilie complained that work left her no time to read, Saint Madeleine Sophie answered: 'Like you, dear child, I can scarcely read at all; my children devour me! I am not even able to supply their wants. I really don't know what food

it is we are giving them ! They are always so hungry. Don't you also find that is so ? Perhaps we give them food that has no nourishing properties ; if it is of ourselves, it is indeed but as dust and wind. We must give them real food : Our Lord and all that is of the supernatural life. . . . And for ourselves, what we need is prayer, the continual cry of the soul to our Divine Master.'

Mother du Chastaignier having complained of her long silence, the Saint answered : ' But you must at least have heard me spoken of ! On December 22 you did not know whether I was still in existence ! ! It is well that you should realise it at times. I received your letter as you may see, the one in which you first complained, and then, lower down sent me your good wishes for the New Year. I do not doubt their sincerity, but if you are ambitious for yourself, you are also ambitious for me. If you want a place in heaven for yourself near the throne of the Lamb, I know you want me to be there too with you. But if this is so, dear child, pray for me and ask, without any pity, for suffering, humiliation, detachment from all things and *deprivation of all consolations*, so that I may at last set out on the road of the saints. However, think over it before you ask this last trial, for if God hears you, I shall be obliged to give up the pleasure of ever seeing you again in this world, and I do not feel ready for that if I can help you, but if I should be an obstacle to your perfection, I shall have no hesitation in saying good-bye to you till eternity.' And a little later she wrote again : ' One word . . . to tell you that I *do read* letters, and that I even answer them when I can find a minute to do so ! It is only letters for the New Year and for feasts,

which are generally nothing but compliments and congratulations that I find it hard to read, even the first page! Make good use of this piece of information, and do not adopt a custom which would increase the number of letters I refrain from reading.'

In 1812 the Saint was at Niort, and Mother du Chastaignier, who was impatiently awaiting her arrival at Poitiers, found that the visit to Niort was immeasurably long: 'It had not struck me, as it has you . . . that I had been a long, very long time at Niort. For those who are at Poitiers, I hear it seems long, but that is all! However, I have not yet come to an end of the work. They want me to stay here till after the Epiphany. . . . I must say I am very happy with them, and if Our Lord had not given me a particular attraction for imperfect people (I am only speaking of you, and Messoria, you may tell her so, and of Brigitte) I should remain here till Easter. . . . I only like the imperfect who wish to correct themselves, of course, and as you three are working with all your hearts for this, especially since I left you . . . You may finish this sentence yourself.'

'I never forget you, dear Adrienne,' she wrote to Mother Michel, 'but how can I find time to write? I have spent the last three months on the roads! And I am obliged to give up all the correspondence that I love best—that with Philippine, Thérèse, Emilie, and you. I only write a word to each one, and it is always on business. It is very dry! Thérèse, who thinks well of all the world, and especially of me, wrote in her last letter "that I had left all things of this world, to raise myself up and rest in God alone!"

I smile at her thought. I try to do so . . . but by a path which leads few souls to that end.'

To another she wrote : ' I received your letter, my dear child, and though it was very badly written, I did not give up till I had *deciphered* it all, so great was my desire to hear from you. . . .'

And to Mother Emilie : ' I got your little word, dear child, in the letter of your superior. You know how much I love to meet you, no matter where I find you ; but it is above all at the foot of the Cross that I love to see you, for in this century, so far from His own, Calvary is still always in His Church ; there have always been Magdalens and other friends who have followed Him on that mountain. If my dear Emilie and her Mother had had the happiness to be lovers of the Cross, how happy should we be. . . . But what is this new trouble you have ? The details of that cross would interest me. Courage, child, life is passing.' And to this very dear friend she wrote a little later : ' In the midst of all my work, dear Emilie, I sometimes wonder what it is that I feel is missing to me, and that is why my thoughts turn so often to your house ! I realise that it was your silence that had disquieted me, and I became sure of this by the great comfort I felt on receiving your letter. In spite of the detachment in which we have to live, there is a bond which keeps us close to our common centre, and it is not to be wondered at that we should need to write at times. . . .'

And again, when Mother Emilie was troubled at the prospect of some sorrow : ' . . . Come, absolute abandonment to the holy Will of God ! If you only knew all the good that He wishes you if you are faithful, you would love Him for the past, for the

present and for the future : you would love Him beyond words. I am writing in such a hurry, my desk is covered with letters which must be answered, and I am so tired I can scarcely see. So I must be short in spite of my wish. You might make this excuse for me to those who complain of my silence. . . . Good-bye, my child, love Our Lord, and love everyone for His love. You know how lovingly, in spite of all your faults, I am all yours. . . .'

And to Mother Michel she said : ' My poor heart, dear Adrienne, carries with it everywhere the sorrow of not being able to pause a moment to console your heart which seems to be in trouble. Our Lord wishes to do this all alone, let Him do so ; give yourself with confidence into His hands, which are at the same time so gentle and so crucifying. When shall we be above all these miseries ? God alone and His Cross. That heart is too covetous for which this treasure is not enough. Read Père Rigoleux, since he appeals to you. . . . Has the fine weather set in with you yet, and have they begun the harvest ? I commend the children to your care. You must think kindly of them and not be severe. You must love them. They [those of Grenoble] are often troublesome for years, but later on they are more full of resource than others. Make no comparisons, they must not think that you regret the children you have left elsewhere. Their pride could not stand this preference, and they would not love you.'

And a little later, writing to the same, she said : ' No, my dear Adrienne, make no vows or extraordinary promises to God ; it is more perfect to leave yourself simply to Him and to your superiors. Special ties bind not only you but your superiors. How could

the Society be governed, if each one, wishing to humble herself, put hindrances in the way of obedience ? I do not know to what work you will be put in the future, but I want to be free to use you as God shall inspire us. . . . Try to become more and more fit to serve the Society. Restrain your imagination, but gently, . . . if your heart loves above all Him who ought to fill it wholly, it will find no difficulty in ruling over all your powers. . . . Good-bye, my dear child, I am writing in a great hurry, you know why. Give my love to the children, especially to Zoé, Louise, Clarisse, Marine, etc. Tell Marine to be brave and persevere. How gladly I shall receive her among the Children of Mary on her feast day. . . . Mother Thérèse is returning to Grenoble immediately and so does not answer your letter. What bad pens I have ! '

A few days later she wrote again : ' This is only a word. I should like to answer your last letter, but I cannot to-day. . . . Do not be troubled by the squalls in your soul, the sea is more beautiful and calmer after a storm.'

' How I have been longing to write to you,' she says in a letter to Mother Maillucheau ; ' it is always a sorrow to me to use another's hand to write what I have to say to you. I am better, thank God, I am only weak and have wearisome, sleepless nights. If I were free, I know what my best remedy would be. To go and pass three or four months with my old friend, there I would find rest for soul and body ; and if it were the Will of God, both would seem to be necessary for me. But I must not speak of ourselves, let us only think of the needs of your house. If I could be of any use I should indeed be glad.

I shall not give up my place to anyone this year for the visit of your house. I feel too deeply the longing to see you all again. . . . But I do not know when I shall be free to go. . . . Before turning my steps towards your mountain, I shall have to make a journey to Amiens. Have patience, I shall keep you *au courant* of all my affairs and shall answer your letters as far as I possibly can.'

But illness in the school at Paris put a stop to this journey, and it was not till the June of 1818, almost a year later, that the Saint visited Grenoble. Leaving it for Chambéry about August 28, she wrote to Mother Maillucheau: 'I shall not attempt to give you an account of our short journey, my dear mother, my two companions will do that; I should find it very hard to give you any details of it. I was in such sorrow leaving you . . . that I could not say a word all the way. When I thought of you, and of your worries, and the anxieties which will come upon you, I had great difficulty in keeping back my tears. . . . I wanted to be alone, and I could not be so for one moment. You can imagine, after that, how much I saw of what went on around me, my whole soul had stayed behind near you. The thought of God revived me in the depths of my soul, and I offered Him the sacrifice that I had just made. . . . I foresee, however, that we shall be making the foundation at Lyons next spring. How delightful it will be to come and live in your neighbourhood for half a year, to visit you several times, and perhaps get you to come and help me for a little in the foundation. There, dear mother, is a hope which lessens the bitterness of our separation. Our dear Lord, who knows our weakness, allows this hope to encourage

us in our efforts. . . . Give my love to them all, tell them that I carry them in my heart, and that if it had been possible for my love for them to have increased, I should now love them more in Our Lord, since I have myself seen their zeal and self-sacrifice for the Society. . . . Forgive my bad writing. You know that I write now with my eyes almost shut, or dim from weariness. Good-bye, dear Mother. I am longing for news of you.'

Six days later she wrote again : ' You began your last letter with a reproach that pierced to the depths of my soul. Happily I could find an excuse for it in your heart. It is quite true that if I could, I would write to you every day, above all in these first moments of separation, so painful to hearts which God has united so closely. But He united them that we might help each other to love and serve Him more completely ; we must therefore encourage ourselves to suffer, and to live far from one another, as long as His good pleasure asks for this. . . . All that you tell me delights me, and I am sure that Our Lord, for whom you make the sacrifice of all that is most dear to you—I mean that longing which would lead you into solitude—will restore to you a hundredfold all that you give Him.' A few days later she wrote from Lyons : ' Yesterday, when I found myself on the road between Burgoin and Grenoble, I was troubled, thinking that I was so near to you, and that I could have arranged to stay two days with you. . . . But we should have suffered from another separation, perhaps more painful than the last ! . . . Pray for me. I shall be obliged, as you are, to make up for all that is missing. [The foundation at Chambéry had called for help from

Paris and Grenoble.] It will mean no little work, with journeys, buildings, and the noviceship, to say nothing of the school. I have so little time that I must be content for to-day, dear Mother, to tell you, and all your family, that you have no friend who loves you more than she who is really in *Corde Jesu* your Mother.'

It is not wonderful that Saint Madeleine Sophie was able to ask for any sacrifice from those to whom she wrote like this.

When the schools were tried by illness, her sorrow was always great : ' It is a terrible blow to us. Fiat ! It is just these crosses from heaven that we must adore. I am also in the greatest need of money. Sometimes from weariness and anxiety, I feel I can no more ! I put all into the Heart of Our Lord, but still nature suffers.'

And in a similar case she wrote : ' Caroline is very ill, we have no hope of saving her. . . . My greatest anguish is to see the sorrow of her father. Pray for him. Several other children are also ill, Aline and Zoé, not dangerously so as yet, but we cannot tell.' The next day she wrote : ' Our dear Caroline is no more . . . or rather she began her true life yesterday in the embrace of God. . . .' Offers of help came in from all the houses. ' Marthe arrived last night,' she wrote to Mother Prevost, the superior at Amiens, ' and she began work at once. Our sick people are no better, and each day we have a fresh case. . . . It is a terrible trial, as you well know No, dear Mother, we do not need furniture or money, we can manage. How much I have to thank you for. I cannot go into details, sorrow has overcome me, but I feel your kindness deeply all the same.'

Space forbids further quotations. But these few given here, chosen from letters written in the first twenty years of her religious life—that is to say, all before she was forty—show what was her daily bread, and how like her life was to our own—a life in which there was an untold sum of labour, much sorrow, much weariness, much disappointment, as always when with imperfect instruments we strive to work out the visions of our soul in clay; but over all there was a still greater joy.

Sunshine had gladdened her life more often than clouds had dimmed its brightness. She had given with her child's great heart all that she possessed, and God had multiplied her gift exceedingly.

The thought of Him had taken so strong a hold upon her heart, His image and love were so deep a reality in her soul, that her all-absorbing work never separated her from Him. The permanent setting for every scene of her life had been the glory of that spiritual world, 'intensely alive and real though invisible' to her and to all who, like her, have faithfully followed the trail.

But at length the long journey neared its close, the harbour lights came in view. When the Eighth General Congregation of the Order met in June, 1864, the Saint implored the assembled councillors to allow her to lay down the burden of Superiority. 'Age and weakness,' she pleaded, 'make it impossible for me to govern the Society alone.' No one could find it in their hearts to grant that petition; a unanimous 'No' was the only answer given. But the proposition that she should choose a Vicar General to assist her was gladly accepted.

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Her choice fell on Mother Goetz, then forty-seven years of age.

This nomination was a rest and help to the Saint. But no cloud of anxiety as to the future of her work ever dimmed her faith. She knew in whom she had believed from the beginning. To one who expressed dread of a future without her guiding hand, she said in a tone that could never be forgotten: 'Our Lord is there, He it is who founded this little Society, and He will also preserve it. His will has done it all. It was no work of mine. I have marred, not made. I firmly trust that He will not suffer another spirit than that of His Sacred Heart to slip in unperceived.'

By this supreme act of trust, she put all that she loved into His hands, and for ever. She could wait in peace for His summons.

On Sunday, May 21, she came into the room where the Community were assembled for recreation, saying, 'I was most anxious to see you to-day, for on Thursday we are going to heaven.' Thursday the 25th was the Feast of the Ascension; her words were taken to be an allusion to this fact. The next day their true meaning became apparent. Early in the morning, while still at work reading the letters the day's post had brought, she was struck by paralysis. Consciousness remained, but power of speech was lost at once, and thus she had her wish, expressed many years before: 'If God hears my prayer, there will be no last words of mine to repeat, for I shall say nothing at all.'

When the Blessed Sacrament was brought to her, her face lit up with joy. Asked to give one more blessing to the Society, her whole life seemed

to pass into the quick movement of her hand. Then for two days she lay in silence, the battles and laborious buildings of her lifetime over, listening for the hand upon the door. It came as she had told them. On the day on which Christ Himself had once left earth she too passed ' from the Psalm of her guns to the peace of God.'

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AUTHOR

Saint Madeleine Sophie, Foundress

TITLE of the Society of the Sacred Heart, 1779-1865.

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